

ON THE JOB

What do we mean by work? When I was a little boy this word was anathema to me and indicated that there was some chore or something unpleasant to be done. On the other hand one can enjoy working at something that one really likes and in some cases, as in music, the results of hard work are manyfold and yield no end of enjoyment. This is assuming of course, that the particular task at hand is one desired by the individual that is applying all of the effort involved. Another so-called reward of working is being paid in some fashion so that one can live comfortably and eat properly. Fortunately, my childhood was such that I did not have to worry about such mundane matters and so my aversion to the word "work" was fomented by various individuals trying to impose some chore for me to do or to try to convince me that I should be doing something constructive, which somehow they managed to decide what was "constructive." A case in point would be my experiences with grass cutting. My mother would offer my services performing this chore to her friends and more often than not I would not get paid. In some cases the women complained about the job I did! After a few incidents like this I refused to cut grass unless I got paid. The women agreed to pay. The trouble was that the pay was such a pittance that it was not even worth the effort. Not only that but some of the women didn't even own a lawn mower so I had to tote my own to their place, sweat it out (since these jobs were always required in the middle of the summer heat) and then totally exhausted from my work, I had to struggle bringing the damn thing back. As I recall, the most I ever made from some kind soul was \$1.25 for three hours work. The women were always phoning to have me back but I didn't get carried away thinking that it was because I did such a good job. I put it down to the fact that I was cheap. Finally, I rebelled and just refused to do any more lawn mowing.

1. Colonnade Cafeteria

My first experience with an extended period was brought about unfortunately by some misdemeanor that I had perpetrated. I forget exactly what this inappropriate behavior entailed but it was serious enough to invoke the wrath of both my parents and furthermore to condemn me to working for six weeks inside of one of my father's cafeterias. This of course came about during the late summer months when I was through with camp or some other useless place where I was told what to do, how to do and when to do it. I recollect as part of my camp experience getting roused out of bed at 6:30 a.m., dressing hastily, being fed some cereal or whatever and waiting at my front door for a big station wagon to pick me up along with some other unfortunate individuals. We would then be whisked off to this day camp. After a 20 minute sojourn we met at the campsite with the other station wagons full of pre-teenagers and we would then go to a big bulletin board where the activities for the day were outlined for us. Some days were actually tolerable when we could play "kick the can," indulge in archery and on sunny days we would end up playing baseball-the all-American sport. Personally, I found baseball rather boring but since all I had to do was stand in

the sun and get a nice tan, it was tolerable. Some days I managed to slip away somehow and ended up in the chemistry and physics lab at the school and indulge myself examining the equipment and trying to learn something about it. Unfortunately, somebody rat finked on me and the next thing I knew my pants were pulled down by the camp principal and my bare buttocks were given a thorough stimulation. That cured me for a while but I somehow managed to juke the more unpleasant activities and I remember spending more time in the lab. Fortunately for me, I was unseen this time.

No because of my "new assignment" at my father's cafeteria I found myself taking the trolley at 7 AM and some days I could not eat at home so I had to arise even earlier and find some place to eat breakfast before getting to the cafeteria. At this time my father had initiated a training program for future hostesses who would be assisting people in the cafeteria. Three of these girls began about the same time that I did but they were not submitted to most of the chores that were assigned to me. Fortunately for me one of the older women that worked in the kitchen and who made the pecan and cinnamon rolls took a shine to me and after a few conversations with her she made me a roll of my choice which I would eagerly gobble down during our "milk break," so-called and probably now known as a "coffee break." There were about 10 African-American individuals that worked there, taking out the garbage, doing a lot of the work that the white folks didn't want to do. Yours truly, however, was one of the white folks that did the same job that the Afro-Americans did. So it's natural that I began to interact and socialize with them. At first they were somewhat aloof and they used to congregate in the back of the cafeteria which opened up into a huge underground garage. This garage was the bottom of the Buckley building in Cleveland and the main offices of my father's company were housed in this edifice.

I don't remember all of the bad chores that I was asked to perform but the one that I found really hard was drying dishes. The dirty dishes were thrust under steaming hot water and a huge metal container operated by a very muscular fellow that would dip these dishes and then after they were thoroughly cleaned he would lift this big metal container out of the steaming hot water via a pulley system and swing it over to another boiling hot water serving as a rinse. Then the metal container containing these dishes would be plopped onto a metal runway type of thing where two or three of us would be standing. We would then be required to take those hot dishes, dry them and stack them for future use. Some poor asshole like myself would show up from time to time and we would dry those dishes from about 10 AM after our milk break to about 2:30 PM or so. The cafeteria closed at two but there are always some stragglers and the dishes to be washed and dried never seemed to end. There was one person drying dishes that was present every day. She was a wizened old lady, probably around 60 and she never stopped. She was like Mammy Yokum and put us all to shame because nobody seemed to be able to keep up with her.

The second most tasteless job was shucking corn. As soon as I saw the truck come in with a load of corn on the cob I would groan with anticipation and sure enough find myself appointed to go to the back of the cafeteria, sit on the cold floor and start shucking. Now I must backtrack a minute and admit that

although I was 13 years old at the time I got a real crush on one of the girls that was being trained as a hostess. She was beautiful, 17 years old and every time she was around I could hardly keep my composure. Of course I would try talking to her but her girlfriend, who was a bit of a pill and was always trying to assign some distasteful task, which she wasn't authorized to do. But the manager, a man that I could not abide would always back her up. The manager, whom I shall refer to as Mr. H. was a supreme prick and a racist. He and his wife were regular visitors to my home where my parents and they would play bridge on a weekly basis. I never liked Mr. H. from day one. However, his son, George and I were good friends and we got along famously. Mrs. H. was also basically nasty and I remember a few paddlings that I received from her when I was very young.

Anyway, one day I was summoned to shuck corn once again but I had a pleasant surprise awaiting me when I entered the area where we did the shucking. There before my very eyes was the girl that I had fallen for. Not only that but we ended up side-by-side shucking away and of course I used this opportunity to finally be able to talk to her. To my amazement she seemed to like me and when I told her I was studying radio theory she inquired whether I could fix her radio which was presently not functioning properly. Of course I acquiesced and I picked up the radio and after a bit of fooling with it I realized that the tubes were in the wrong place. I was relieved because I didn't know that much about fixing radios so I was quite proud of myself and never thought that perhaps the girl had deliberately reversed the tubes. Now that I think back on it, this might've been the case. In any event I phoned her and she told me to bring it over to the house on Saturday afternoon. Unfortunately for me, my mother spotted my taking out the radio and then asked me where I was going. I told her and off I went.

I rang the bell and my girlfriend answered. She was wearing a pair of shorts and a blouse which hid very little of her body. I was getting very excited but to my disappointment the other two girls were there and I was about to leave when one of them announced that she was going out on some errand. That left the pill, but wonder of wonders, the pill also left! This was almost too much for me. I didn't know what to do or to say so I started stammering about the radio. My girlfriend sat down on the couch and sort of laid back with this bemused expression on her face. She was beautiful and I was not sure about what to do next. She asked me to come over to the couch and sit with her. I was salivating fiercely trying to control myself when the doorbell rang! Nothing happened. The doorbell rang again so my girlfriend went to answer. It was my mother and my father in his car who had come to pick me up. I had to go and of course I was cross examined about my visit. I explained that I was showing the girl how I had fixed her radio. I think my parent's swallowed most of my story and there was also the fact that this girl's career might be on the line so I made sure that any suspicions that my parents had were sufficiently allayed. Subsequently we would manage to see one another sporadically at the cafeteria and sometimes she would get off the trolley one stop before her usual stop and visit me when I was playing in the vacant lot behind my house. But the only satisfaction and consolation that I got was when I heard from my mother later that she had married a fellow named Keith! About

three weeks after this incident all of the girls were transferred to different branches of my father's cafeterias.

Meanwhile, during my breaks I would go out and socialize with the Afro-Americans who seemed a lot more friendly than most of the other people at the cafeteria. Most of them seemed to take great delight in giving the owner's son a hard time. Not so with the blacks. They were very nice to me and after a while I was more or less accepted and they didn't hold back any of their thoughts about the work situation. Other times I would while away my time by pushing myself around on a dolly at great speeds in the underground garage.

One day I was called in to Mr. H.'s office and told not to associate with any of the "colored" employees. Of course I paid no attention to this request and continued socializing with them. Subsequently at the end of the day when I was just about packing up to go home Mr. H. called me into his office and proceeded to spank me! While doing so he was ushering some racial slurs and justifying his action by saying that I had disobeyed him. He was dead right on that one and as soon as I got home I complained to my parents who actually were quite shocked at his demeanor. I vowed never to speak to this individual again and any contact I had with him I made it clear to him that I was not going to talk to him under any circumstances. He did not pursue the matter because I'm sure that my parents had had a little chat with him.

Another day I got the chance to become a hero. The power had crapped out for some reason and everybody was running around in a panic. I figured correctly that a fuse had blown and I suggested this to one of the girls, who completely ignored my suggestion. So while they were all running around like chickens with their heads cut off I simply went to the fuse box (one of the "colored" chaps told me where it was) and found the offending fuse and replaced it with a good one. Fortunately they had some extras in or near the fuse box. Well, I wish I had had a camera to take pictures of the wide-open mouths that ensued. The results of this incident gained me a little respect even from Mr. H. but Mr. H. was an idiot anyway so I was not surprised at his ignorance of electricity.

The only good things I remember about this job were the pecan rolls, my almost Summer of 42 and a great party where I pounded on the piano and all of my "colored" friends danced and approved of my boogie-woogie renditions. The downside of course, was my introduction to the cold, cruel world of exposure to working for a living.

Before I end this chapter I feel that I should inform the reader of the ultimate fate of the cafeteria. My father had hopes of transferring the running of his company to my brother, who was completely disinterested in any business dealing with food, It was thus that my father turned to a distant relative, whom I will call, Carl, to hopefully train and one day take over the reins. Carl was an extremely ambitious farm boy, who had left farming because of an abusive father. Carl had not only ambition but trained himself to con people with flattery and favors. He seemed to be omnipresent and was always wheeling and dealing and trying to "get things wholesale." I found him phoney, but I did not totally dislike him. I just figured he was an idiot. My parents thought the world of him, of course, so he got away with a lot of things which had I been his boss, would have never

tolerated. Carl would somehow always emerge from some situation having everyone think that any pleasant outcome was due to his vast influence. Carl seemed to be here, then there, like the electron. And like the electron when you tried to assess where or what Carl did, the very act of trying to find out made the situation obscure. However, Carl was really adept at conning people and used this ability to advantage. One day Carl even showed up to help me shuck corn and explained the finer points of this exercise. But after five minutes he was gone but later claimed to my parents how he thought it might be beneficial to me to receive his instruction and wisdom about corn shucking.

Carl was also the perfect gofer and errand boy. He was sent all over the place to allegedly smooth out some situation. One time he bragged about finding a place in New York city (he was always finding places) where one could buy coats cheaply. My mother took him up on this one and instructed me to buy one of these coats. Carl was surprised but he sent me over to some hole-in-the-wall joint that I had trouble finding. Carl told me to just mention his name and there would be no problem. I did mention his name and they never heard of him, they said. Finally, when I described Carl, the fellow laughed and told me that Carl was there trying to sell him something-now he remembered etc.; one of those bits! I bought the coat but one of my friends happened to accidentally flick a cigarette ash on it and the next thing I knew, there was a giant hole in the coat and I had to dump it.

Eventually,, to make a long story short, my father died and Carl assumed the presidency of the business. It took Carl about 3 years to put the whole business in the toilet. It's true that the restaurant business had changed but any business man, worth his salt, could have changed with the times and kept the business burgeoning.

2. Silverwood Dairy and Lumber Mill

When I was 14 I was shipped off to my aunt and uncle in a small Ontario town called Lindsay. Aside from the culture shock which I got over very quickly my first summer months during school vacation were spent gloriously doing nothing except swimming, cycling and socializing b,y going to "necking" parties. I also played a lot of cards with my aunt and uncle, who were inveterate poker players. I learned a lot about poker, but since I was having a lot of fun, my aunt and uncle vowed that I should not be allowed to be idle the next summer. Indeed, as soon as I finished school they were both on my case to seek employment. Needless to say, I had no intention of doing this but the pressure was brought to bear and through a good friend of mine I managed to get a job wrapping bread, or rather, standing by making sure that the machine that wrapped the bread would not foul up somehow. I was there to see that if it did it would be quickly fixed and corrected. Furthermore, this gig paid \$15 per week! This was a very good salary for 1945. I was quite proud of myself in obtaining this job and I informed my aunt and uncle. Their reaction was one that I had not anticipated. They seemed to be miffed at my good fortune and to my utter horror, dismay and disappointment, my uncle phoned the bread company and had them rescind their offer. Furthermore, my uncle got me a job at a lumber yard where I had to arise at 6 AM and work

until 5 PM. The 7 AM whistle would signal all of the men to commence working. It was a 10 hour day with a break for lunch between 12 PM and 1 PM. I would come home for lunch made by my aunt, who was a terrible cook. Her culinary skills were only superseded by her terse sarcastic nature and her snide remarks. My uncle was a bit more reasonable but not by much. I really resented their interference in my original employment opportunity and I vowed to part company with my aunt and uncle at the first opportunity. Fortunately this came about in February 1946 when I ran away. Of course these two jobs left a very bad taste in my mouth for work of any sort but you guessed it, even more was yet to come about.

Allow me to elucidate some of the chores that I was asked to perform at the lumber company. The first one was working on a machine called the "planer." This joyous exercise consisted of filling a huge dolly with boards that had been cut and then stacked in various piles so as to dry out the wood. These mounds of wood were then kept in the lumberyard. We would take these boards and one of us would stand on one side of the planer and the other would then retrieve the planed board and stack them on another dolly. Then when all was finished we would repeat the performance so as to plane the flip side of said boards. Needless to say, the work was tedious, exhausting and boring. Another chore was to work on a machine that tongues and grooves in various sizes of boards. Sometimes it would be required to fit boards together so as to make something wider. The individual would have to run the tongued board through a glue machine. This machine had the nasty habit of sometimes catching the person's fingers between the rollers and pulling out one's fingernails! I had to be very careful when using this device. One day I was asked to work on the bandsaw. I had already observed that the men working on these machines had fingers or parts of fingers missing. I absolutely refused to have anything to do with that machine despite the threats of being fired. That was fine with me to be fired since I hated the job but I suspected that the boss would probably talk to my uncle and my uncle would most likely agree with me and that is what happened. Every week we would be required to make boxes to ship later that would contain other dairy products. I was given the task of using a croebar-tyoe metal bar which looked like an elongated German hand grenade. I would use this to hammer in nails that were already preset in various blocks and these blocks were designed in such a way as to hold the various dairy products. I quickly found the trick of wearing kangaroo gloves but although my hands were protected from scratches and cuts for the most part, they did swell up to twice their size and that of course provided amusement for my aunt and uncle. I think that I worked at this job for eight weeks before I threw in the towel. One day I just had had it and I refused to do any more. My uncle made dire threats including cutting off my allowance but at that juncture I didn't care because I had made money from working. Anyway, school was about to start again in September and I was already making plans to run away.

3. Lymans Limited

My next experience happened in the summer of 1946 after I had completed my high school exams. I no sooner sat down in a comfortable chair in my grandmother's apartment when she started to cajole me into finding employment forthwith. I forget how it came about but I ended up packing boxes full of drugs and sundries for various drugstores in Montréal. I don't think I even made \$15 per week! All I remember is sweating it out in some old funky building for hours and making certain that there were no mistakes in the orders. My complaints of course fell on deaf ears and indeed, my grandfather was greatly amused by my discomfiture when I expounded on what had transpired at the job. Fortunately for me, the wholesale firm started to go belly up and a bunch of us were fired or should I say, "laid off." I did manage to steal a lot of drugs before the place was closed. My grandmother was complaining that she couldn't sleep and asked me if I could find her some pills. I brought her a huge bottle of Amytal and some other barbiturates which pleased her. And all of this stuff including morphine sulfate was out in plain sight on a shelf with the other chemicals. Also the record-keeping and inventory were slipshod at best. Besides in that era drugs didn't seem to be a problem like today. My termination was actually a godsend. This allowed me some relief and solace to enjoy what was left of my summer vacation- or so I thought.

4. Delivering Milk

I did have a few days of rest but my grandmother had plans for me. She was quite friendly with our milkman and she asked this fellow if he could use me to help deliver milk. The milk man smiled and agreed to take me on for a week or two. I found myself carrying a big metal basket full of quarts of milk, pints of cream, butter, cottage cheese and so on, up various flights of stairs and I thought that I was going to expire. The milkman was somewhat amused but he turned out to be a really nice fellow. He was an ex-commando, extremely strong and when he saw me about to collapse he would always come to help me. After a few days we got to be quite friendly and he would regale me with stories of his sexploits seducing the neighborhood wives. He was fairly handsome and always looked very neat in his uniform. His affability and mild manners of course swept the women off their feet. Even my grandmother was taken with his demeanor. One day after about a week of working with him, he showed up looking a bit nonplussed. I inquired why he was down in the mouth. He told me that he had been robbed! I asked him how much money he had lost. He told me that he has lost nothing but he was afraid that he had reacted too quickly. He then proceeded to tell me that one of the robbers had put a gun in his back. That was mistake number one for the robber since the milkman was an ex- commando and had been trained in hand-to-hand combat. He instinctively whipped around disarming the fellow and breaking his arm and before the second fellow could do anything he was on the ground crying out in pain from some lethal blow that the milkman had delivered. The cops came, picked up what was left of these guys and spirited them away to jail. The milkman said that he shouldn't have reacted like this. He should have just given them the money. I replied that he should've killed both of

them just for the exercise. This made him laugh heartily and no more was said about the matter. After two weeks it became clear that I wasn't cut out to be a milkman. But the milkman insisted that he liked me and told me that if I needed money from time to time I could help him for a day or two. I thought this very nice of him.

When I had first arrived from my excursion to Arizona (my final destination after running away), my grandmother and grandfather had been somewhat chastised by my great-grandmother, who was still alive at that time and had actually listened to my tales of woe. As soon as I arrived my stomach, or should I say my intestines started to act up and I had a constant pain in my torso around McBurney's point. Everybody thought that my appendix was acting up but the doctor quickly dispelled that notion by shoving his hand up my assjole and feeling the appendix manually to make sure there was no infection. I won't bother to go into too many details except that I was given a giant enema. Then I was forced to drink a large goblet of barium chloride. After this I was placed on a big Frankenstein-like slab and my digestive tract was scrutinized by various medical personnel via a fluoroscope. All of this rigamarole somehow managed to clear up all of my gut discomfiture and I was ready to continue school and most importantly to be able to work as soon as I was let out of school. What was the final diagnosis? The doctor informed my grandparents that I had most likely "nervous indigestion!" When my grandfather heard this, he flipped and began a rant about the money he had to lay out for my "vacation" in the hospital. My grandmother did her best to assuage his ire but he kept going on about this for weeks afterward.

However, by some miracle I managed to avoid work until September. I did a lot of hitchhiking and went to Knowlton to look up a girl friend. But when I got there I was snubbed and sent packing. I never understood why this occurred since the girl and I were getting on famously and as I recall, she even invited me to come to see her-probably figuring that I would never be able to get there. Undaunted I visited my friend's erstwhile girlfriend and it was instant love. I will call her Enid. She was beautiful and extremely intelligent. She also played a good, classical piano, but like most classical pianists of that era, they were not able to play boogie wootie and my prowess at this style impressed piano players that ordinarily could play circles around me-Enid in particular. I also met a lot of teens in the Snowdon area and since I had just turned 17 in June, it was a great time in my life. My night life was quite full and I tried to get out of the small room I occupied in the stuffy duplex that I shared with my grandmother and alcoholic grandfather-the latter being a mean and nasty drunk that would come home nightly when he was off the wagon and try to beat me with golf clubs or whatever was handy. I was pretty agile and I used to be able to fend off his forays with the dining room table extension or beat a hasty exit over the back balcony railing a la Spencer Tracey. My grandfather's big belly would hit the railing of the balcony (we were on the first floor) and I was hoping that someday it would give way and he would plunge down the 10 feet or so. This distance was nothing to me at that age. I was quite agile. Come to think of it now, maybe I should have sawed through the railing! My main chore was to do the dishes after supper so

sometimes my grandfather would calm down, feel guilty and keep giving me quarters, having forgotten that he had just done so 10 minutes previously. As soon as the dishes were out of the way, I was out of there. I spent quite a few nights at the Café St. Michel listening to Louis Metcalfe's outfit-at that time, the only band that could play bebop.

5. H.L.Blatchford Limited

So, the summers of 1945 and 1946 were not too enjoyable. The former was definitely the worse experience of the two. The latter did provide a bit of respite as I managed to experience a modicum of freedom at the end of the summer just before going back to school. My memories of Montreal High school were mostly good. The students came from every social background and we all were united in a passionate hate for the then principal. It was a unique experience but alas, short-lived since I was expelled in the first semester of 1947 for juking school. There was no possibility of my attending another school-my grandmother decided that forthwith and of course, you guessed it, I was again cajoled into seeking employment. What followed was a 2 year period of jobs that I will now describe in some detail because when I think back on it, it seems unbelievable.

At this juncture I had a pretty good knowledge of chemistry and had passed the Ontario grade 12 exam in 1945. So my grandmother and I browsed the want-ads for a position in a chemical company. We hit paydirt almost immediately. A firm by the name of H. L. Blatchford Ltd. Was looking for an office boy. I went for an interview and was questioned by a middle-aged bespeckled gentleman, whom I will call Mr. G. Mr. G displayed all the characteristics of a cost accountant (which he was) and after a lot of palaver, made me an offer. My duties would be to write letters (I could touch type), an ability that I had acquired in the Lindsay Ontario high school. I was forced to take a typing class in one of my free periods because somebody had seen me at the local pool room and had rat-finked to the principal. Realizing that I was enjoying myself away from school he made certain that each and every day from then on was filled with classes. One of them happened to be a typing course. I could also file papers, run errands and act as liaison between the factory (which manufactured resins and zinc stearate among other chemicals). I found out later that the company also fronted for Binney and Smith, a British dye producing company whose dyes were used in printing Canadian paper money. All of this sounded very exciting and I accepted the job. I was to be paid \$15 per week. H. L. Blatchford was a small company but did business with a litany of other corporations. I quickly became acquainted with Canadian businesses in general and also experienced the interplay between blue and white collar prejudices and thinking. H. L. himself would generally be in his private office, which oversaw the space occupied by all the white collar employees. The space housed an order department (2 people), the purchasing (1 person), accounting (1 person), secretary(1 female person), payroll (1 female person), sales (1 person in Montreal and 1 person in Toronto), the office manager (1 person), the Binney and Smith rep (1 person) and yours truly. The blue collars were housed in the factory which was connected by a door but quite separate

from the office environment. The resins were made by a latin fellow, inks were mixed by H.L.'s brother, who had problems with alcohol, the plant manager and metal worker, chemical lab run by a PhD, zinc stearate section and superintendant that looked after the heating and power requirements. This individual, whom I will call Ernie was an extremely independent fellow and was generally unfriendly towards anyone. However, he was a crackerjack super and knew his craft like nobody I've met since. For some reason he took a shine to me. I was always talking to the factory people and they liked to bend my ear with all their woes. I kept my ears open and most of the time, my mouth shut as I felt that I could learn something. The other white collar people did not socialize much with the factory people but I did. I genuinely liked them and I got along pretty well with them. I never told tales out of school. I would sometimes be questioned about what this or that individual had said. I tried always to put a positive spin or just simply lie about what had been put to me if I thought it would get back to them. It was a great compliment to me to learn that on Christmas eve when all of the employees were imbibing potables that I was summoned by none other than Ernie to share a bottle of scotch with him in the furnace room. This gesture was not offered to any of the other employees that I know of. I hung about the chemistry lab and the doctor shared a lot of info but when I saw all of the stains, the holes in their clothing, the bad smells and so on, I really got turned off and decided to think more about pursuing a chemical career, at least in a lab.

Another serendipitous moment occurred when Norman, the factory manager, who knew that I was interested in mathematics, agreed to make me an abacus. I briefly explained what I wanted and a week or so later, he produced a large, beautifully made abacus which I kept for years.

One day I was given a chore to do some accounting. The fellow that was ordinarily there was away. Mr. G introduced me to the Friden calculator and after 5 minutes with this device, I was hooked. I had an interest in math and had passed my grade 10 Ontario exam in Algebra in 1945. I also had bought some math books on my own so I spent all my free time with the Friden. This device did not find square roots so when the Friden tech came by to fix the machine, I asked him and he took me down to his office after talking with Mr. G and I was shown a method to find square roots.

When I look back on this period I think that this was one of my better jobs- at least, at first. I was promised an advance to the purchasing department, but the old codger there was not about to tolerate this. He gave me crap to find that he knew I could not possibly get. I was sent down continuously to the customs building where I would spend a good part of the day stamping leaflets or clearing some horseshit ads that were never used. I was also promised a raise after 3 months but it was not forthcoming. One day I got so pissed off that I got drunk, bought a huge smelly cigar and staggered back into the office. The girls were highly amused but the order department fellows were fit to be tied. I had managed to fuck up something or other of theirs. Now instead of looking forward to coming to work, I began to find excuses to not show up or I would spend the day playing the piano at some store and tell Mr. G some bullshit that I got into a wrangle at the customs house. Eventually I got fed up completely and told Mr. G. that I had

had it. We had a long talk, but he could see that it was no use so I left the company. I must admit that I had ambiguous feelings about leaving. I had genuinely liked the people with whom I worked. One of the guys in the order department offered to rent me a room in his apartment. My grandmother quickly put the kibosh on this offer. I quit around June of 1947 so I was eager to spend some time with my friends playing ball, attending parties, seeking companionship with some females and so on. My grandmother did not want to hear about this either so again, I was cajoled into seeking employment forthwith.

6. Goodyear Tire and Rubber

I did manage to have a few days of respite but I was consistently pressured into my finding employment ASAP. After perusing the various papers I managed to land a job at Goodyear Tire and Rubber-in the office, as an office boy again. The office was small and housed about eight individuals. My desk was next to a pretty secretary and also near the door to the factory part of the company. At first I thought that I was going to have the same freedom of movement that I had at Blatchford's. This notion was quickly dispelled and I was practically chained to my desk, given various boring chores and my only respite was gossiping with the female secretaries. As I recall there was a coffee break in the morning and one in the afternoon and the lunch hour was supposedly one hour. The pay was about \$20 per week and I thought after one week at this place that I was about ready to go around the bend. The only freedom of movement that I really experienced was my lunch hour. As soon as that clock read 12 o'clock, I was out of there like a shot.

One day after finishing my lunch I was walking along St. James Street when I heard a familiar voice calling "Hey Keith!" It was my good friend, Winkie. It seems that he was working at a company called Gold and Sons. This was a well-known clothing store and my friend was a salesman there now. We agreed to meet the next day for lunch and this provided me great relief to be talking to someone on a similar wavelength. I think this was on a Thursday and we met the next day and also promised to eat lunch together daily when possible. The following Monday I noticed that the office manager, who was always keeping his beady eyes on everybody, has gone on three weeks vacation. His proximity at the end of the office with his back to the window that overlooked the street, allowed him to survey every possible nook and cranny of the small office area. One could not even pick their nose without his noticing it. His absence therefore provided me with a great sense of relief and indeed, the two girls commented on this and we all had a good laugh.

My date with my friend was kept and we got carried away a bit so that I only returned about 1:30 PM. No one seemed to notice the difference nor did anybody say anything so I got into the habit of extending my lunch hour to two or three. This didn't deter me from performing my duties. I was still able to finish the work that I was given and I found that the day was a lot less boring and I began to relax a bit. However, I still did not like the place that much and I wanted to find something else but I was just too lazy to start looking-even during my extended

lunch hours. I must also mention that I was employed at this establishment during the summer and the heat added tremendously to my discomfort since there was no air-conditioning. All of us were sweating profusely and sweltering in that office and when we got out we had to contend with the usual rush-hour traffic and crowded streetcars. I was usually somewhat exhausted at the end of the day but after a hearty meal provided by my grandmother I was out gallivanting around with my other friends at night. We would usually meet at a drugstore or Deli and then decide what mischief we were going to get into that evening. We would sometimes go to the tavern, visit some girlfriends, go to a movie together or just hang out and bullshit.

The office manager returned and I shaved my long lunch hour back to one hour but alas, somebody rat-finked on me and after a couple of days the office manager had a chat with me and I was cashiered. Needless to say, my grandmother was fit to be tied. I suffered through various diatribes and lectures and determined that this new job that I would surely be obliged to get would be something worthwhile-something more suited to my talents.

7. Imperial Tobacco

Eventually, the honeymoon was over and I had to find another job. Somehow I managed to acquire one at Imperial Tobacco. At the time I smoked McDonald cigarettes so I had to hide my packages at work. The fellow that hired me was a Mr. Crichton. Mr. C fancied himself as some sort of psychologist and I had to be analyzed thoroughly before I was hired. Mr. C had great plans for me. But first, I was to work in the mail room so as to familiarize myself with the different departments and get to know where everything was. The mail room was overseen by some Scotch fellow that took himself quite seriously. He made certain that we all did our boring, aggravating jobs but he allowed us to read when we had nothing to do. At that time I was reading some medical book and this would evoke remarks from the Scotchman like, "If you read enough of those books you'll think you have all kinds of diseases." I would laugh and come in every day and tell him what I had and what he had and he should see the doctor. My humor was not appreciated. I spent three or four weeks in that bloody mail room and finally was transferred to another department. The one good thing was that I got to know every nook and crevice of the plant. I also found out that no employee could go away from the plant during business hours without a pass-not even for lunch. This put a damper on any thoughts I had of juking work and joining some of my musician friends uptown-or so I thought.

One day I noticed a hole in the back fence in the rear of one of the buildings that abutted St. Antoine, where a streetcar took one downtown. I determined to figure out a way around all the guards and get on that streetcar.

Anyway, my new job put me in a small office run by an old English gentleman that was straight out of an British film. I could hardly keep a straight face when this man started expounding about something or other. In brief, my new job was to put numbered contract papers in numerical order at the end of the day. These papers would be put on my desk, which fortunately, was in a bit of an

alcove off the main office where others were working. This gave me a chance to abscond and to freely wander about. I would take some papers with me so people would think that I was running some errand. I quickly learned that at most, there were only about 7 or 8 contracts at the end of the day. Ergo, as long as I made it in time to take care of these papers, everybody would be happy. After a few days I decided to see what would occur if I deked out of the back door and go through that hole in the fence. I made it, no sweat, and spent the day with friends uptown. I then returned about 3 o'clock, snuck back in and went to my cubbyhole to file the papers. I kept doing this for a few weeks but after seeing all the movies and so forth it got to be a bore and I was getting afraid that somebody would see me and rat-fink on me. I then remembered that I had seen a room in one of the buildings that housed a bunch of old contracts and papers all over the floor. It was an ungodly mess, but it had one advantage. It was out of the way and once I tidied up that room I could do what I wanted in it since no one could see me. I mentioned this to Mr. Stuart, my English boss, and he went with me to survey the scene. He was appalled and asked me how long it would take me to complete the job. I told him that I did not know but it would take at least two weeks whereupon he replied that it would be more like 6 weeks. I had to refrain from laughing but I put on my most serious expression and agreed with him. "Good luck," said he, and departed.

It took me 3 days and I had each and every paper, contract, whatever in chronological order and I even impressed my self with the job that I did. Now, I had to amuse myself during the day somehow, when I could not meet my friends or go to a movie. To this end, I bought an air pistol, set up a target and practiced shooting darts at a board that I had fixed up. I also read a lot and I found a long table that I put in the room so that I could nap during the day. I was staying out late at nights sometimes and required some sleep. As time went by I got more and more confident. One day I was snoozing and I heard a voice say, "Keith, wake up!" There was a note of urgency in the voice so I arose and opened the door and saw my boss and another wheel coming up the stairs! I panicked, but regained my composure, wiped the dandruff out of my eyes and whipped open the door striding confidently up to the two men. "I'm glad you're here," said I, "I was just about to come to see you." Mr. Stuart inquired as to how I was faring. He was a bit surprised when I told him that I had finished. I proudly opened the door and the men looked in and could not believe what they saw. I asked them, "Is this satisfactory?" The two of them were perusing some of the papers and commenting on how everything was in chronological order. They were suitably impressed and complimented me highly on my work. However, the bad news was that I had to figure out another scam to bide my time. This job was beginning to interfere with my social life. I complained to my friend, Dave, whom I would sometimes visit and hang with at the McGill Union, where they had a great grand piano and where we could play bridge. Dave said that he would help and call Mr. Stuart and tell him that he, Dave, was my uncle and that I was ill. I thought he was kidding until he picked up the phone and did just that. I looked forward to those days as this allowed me to play bridge all day without having to return to putting those bloody papers in order. One day, Dave got creative and he was now on

friendly terms with Mr. Stuart. Mr. S would sometimes comment on the fact that my health was poor and Dave would lay it on thick. I would be in the background trying to stifle my laughter at the boldness of Dave's repartee. At one point Dave even suggested that they play a game of bridge together! I flipped and told Dave that this was not a good idea. Dave laughed and said that he had the old man eating out of his hand.

All went well until one day I came home after work. There was a terrible silence and I could feel negative vibrations as soon as I walked in. "Where have you been?" was the enquiry from both a miffed grandmother and grandfather. I answered, "Just came from work."

"Would you like to rephrase that answer?"

"Maybe, what's up?"

"I got a call from a Mr. Stuart today," said my grandfather. My heart sank. The jig was up. "Furthermore, I do not play bridge," which was my grandfather's attempt at humor. After a thorough chewing out, the two of them told me that Mr. C wanted to see me in his office, first thing in the morning. I tried to tell them that I could not go, but it was no use.

The next morning I woke up with a certain amount of anxiety and more chastising from my grandmother. My grandfather had already left for work. I arrived at Imperial Tobacco and promptly went in to see Mr. C. in his office. He welcomed me with a big smile and said, "Well I must admit that this was one of the best capers that I ever heard. I would've loved to have seen the expression on Mr. Stewart's face. I always thought that you had great potential and imagination and this incident certainly proves it, but of course, you're fired!"

"I figured as much," I replied.

"Well, if it were up to me I would find a more challenging position for you in this company but I have just been given my instructions." With that and an histrionic flourish Mr. C. handed me my final check, insisted on shaking my head and showed me out. As soon as I arrived home my grandmother immediately started nattering about another job.

8. Simpsons

I pounded the pavement and eventually ended up being interviewed by a Mr. Bishop at Simpsons-a department store in Montréal. Mr. Bishop was a capital fellow and we hit it off right away. He offered me a job as an assistant cashier and I was to work in the basement keeping track of the monies being brought in by the drivers that deliver goods, money orders and checks that were being sent daily. My salary was now \$22 per week and the hours were from 11 AM to 7 PM. I was ecstatic because I never enjoyed getting up early in the morning. My grandmother was visibly upset because now she had to make my supper a lot later than 6 PM when my grandfather wanted his supper. She mattered a bit about this but was so relieved that I had a new job that she accepted the circumstance and all was going very well-at first.

Arriving at 11 o'clock was not too traumatic but I had to punch a time card. Sometimes the trolleys would be late and I would arrive five or 10 minutes late.

Some person complained and so Mr. Bishop asked me what was wrong. When I offered my explanation Mr. Bishop understood and he alleged that there would be no more trouble with the time card. As I recall this was exactly what happened.

All the deliveryman turned over their cash to a fellow that was in a metal cage separated from us and most likely bulletproof if need be. The man that worked there was very nice and some days when there was no activity at all-that is, no deliveryman would show up before three o'clock, he would tell us to come back at three o'clock or some other designated time and this would allow us to have a very long lunch hour and I took advantage of this by visiting friends, finding some piano to play on and one day I even had time enough to take in a movie. The guy that I worked with was a few years older than I was, but I found him to be a bit of a prick. I got along with him but I didn't really like him all that much. However, he was easy enough to work with and the two of us would add up all of the money orders that would arrive daily, doublecheck them with a hand crank calculator and then we'd have to include the adding machine print out along with the money orders and checks to the man in the cage. Sometimes we were required to stay past the seven o'clock checkout time because of some of the drivers coming in very late. That didn't bother me too much, but it did bother my grandmother because she was never quite sure when I was going to arrive for supper. Also, when we left the store all the employees were gone except for the security people. We would emerge from the basement and there'd be some asshole that we would have to find, if he weren't around-which he usually wasn't and he would have to let us out (since he had the only key). This was mildly annoying but I didn't think much about it really until one night when I had purchased a map for my room. It was all rolled up in a big cardboard tube and I had brought it in with me that afternoon when we started to work with the new checks and money orders. The security man spotted the large tube and asked what it was. I told him. He wanted to check it out by removing the map from the tube. He was one of these unfriendly sorts and I had no intention of letting him touch that map with his grubby hands and I told him as much. Then he started going on about calling the police. This did not phase me and I told him that if he put his hands on me or my map I'd accuse him of assault and he'd be the one that landed up in jail. This did not make him happy. He would not open the door so then I went to a phone and I told him he'd better let me out or I wpi;d charge him with kidnapping. Meanwhile, two other asshole showed up and made some threatening remarks. All of this because he didn't believe that I had a map and figured that I was stealing something. Finally he told me that I was fired and not to come back the next day. I told him that I would be back and he had no authority to fire anybody.

The next morning I went straight to Mr. Bishop and before he could say anything I said to him, "You hired me as a person to handle money-which implies to me that there is a certain amount of trust involved. Furthermore, I don't relish taking a lot of crap from some guy that's not even my boss. Plus the fact that a lot of the time we have to wait for this guy to show up so that we can be let out to go home."

"It's not that we don't trust you," said Mr. Bishop, "but we just have to make sure that nothing is taken from the store inadvertently."

"Luck, sir, if you really trusted us the security people wouldn't even look through our bags or question us." After a bit more palaver Mr. Bishop assured me that I was not fired and he would speak to the security people. He must have done this because every night I got glares and frowns from the night staff, but they didn't bother me again when I had parcels. Sometimes, I would whip out an invoice and show it to them to make them happy-especially when I received profound scowls.

Meanwhile, my friend, Dave, with whom I used to play bridge with at the McGill Union when I was unemployed, would phone me and tease me by asking when I was going to be free again so that we could go down to the union and generally hang out. He was quite amazed that I was getting along so well and I would see him sometimes when I had a long lunch hour. One day he appeared in the basement just outside of our cage. Before I could say anything he went up to the man in the inner cage and said something to him. The man in the cage beckoned to me and told me that my uncle had died. He expressed his sympathies and told me to take a couple of days off. Of course I knew that this was complete bullshit but I obviously could not correct the error and I left with Dave. I asked him, "What the hell are you thinking?"

Dave's answer was immediate. "I wanted to see you and play some bridge today!" He then laughed hilariously and we spent a few days at the McGill Union. In the evenings I could stay out fairly late because I did not have to get up early in the morning so I spent time going to the Café St. Michel to listen to jazz. However, my cohort at work went on his vacation and I was stuck doing all of the money orders and checks. There was nobody to assist me so it took five times longer and I finally put the ones that I could not do because I got tired into a drawer. By the time my cohort returned there was a whole drawer full of these money orders. When I asked him to help me he refused and told me that I had to do them all myself. I did not do them and then Dave came in again to say that my aunt had died! I was again led off for a couple of days and my cohort had to finish up the money orders and checks himself. This of course made him furious so when I returned we were not on very friendly terms. Then one day I just stayed out for the rest of the day for some reason I cannot remember. Anyway I was bored with the job, I didn't particularly like the guy with whom I was working and I found the whole experience depressing. After a few days upon returning I just told the guy in the cage that I wasn't cut out for this kind of work and I parted company.

Before I end this I did see Mr. Bishop for the last time. I have to say that I could not have had a more sympathetic boss. He was disappointed that I had chosen to quit the job but he understood and wished me luck. He also suggested that I might go back to school and I told him that I was interested in learning math and so on. He was, in short, a wonderful fellow and I felt a bit sad that things did not work out. But the job was really boring and I had to move on. My grandmother was of course quite upset. It was getting into the fall of 1947 and although I was having a great social life, carrying on at night and playing bridge during the day, I

kind of missed the learning experience but school was certainly not in the offing- at least not this year. It was inevitable that I had to find some employment ASAP.

9.Canadian Welding Works

I perused the papers once again and my grandmother found a tiny ad seeking an office boy. I figured nothing would come of it but decided to try out anyway. The company that was advertising was called Canadian Welding Works. It was situated on William Street just opposite the customs house on Youville Square. I expected a large establishment but I was surprised to find a veritable hole in the wall with three people in a small three room space. The main space upon walking in housed a desk and a counter. Just beyond this were two rooms- one had a big desk and it contained a very comfortable looking chair and I surmised that was the boss's office. The only trouble was, there was nobody in it. Adjacent to this room was another room which housed two individuals-a draftsman and another gentleman who turned out to be an engineer. The fellow that met me was the office manager and he and the engineer interviewed me. The office manager I will call Jim. The engineer was a chap named Dustin. They seemed to like me and they offered me a job paying \$23 a week as I recall. I didn't think much of the place but I liked the atmosphere. I accepted their offer and started the next day.

Jim and I got on like a house on fire. He was really a nice guy and very helpful in my learning the ropes. I can touch type but I could not take dictation so when Mr. Dustin had me writing a letter he would stand there, belt out the text and I would type the words almost as fast as he dictated. Mr. Dustin was very patient but he brooked no nonsense. When he was around we had to put our noses to the grindstone. Fortunately, he was away a lot of the time. The draftsman was a Scotchman who didn't give a damn what Jim and I did when Mr. Dustin was away and sometimes would participate in our fooling around. He was a quiet guy and he had a stuttering problem which made him a bit shy, but he was a nice enough fellow and we all got along famously.

There was another character in this drama. His name was Johnny and he was the foreman of the factory. He was the one that actually erected the fire escapes or other constructions that kept the company in business. I soon found out that Johnny and the big boss had founded the company together. The big boss was named Mr. Bennett. His job was essentially gadding about trying to get orders for various projects. I only met him after I was hired and he seemed like a very pleasant man. He was quite interested in the welfare of all of the employees but he was hardly ever there. Jim and I did a lot of fooling around but it never got in the way of our doing our jobs. We used to do a lot of telephoning. We would call girls, order catalogs for ourselves using the company's name and so on. One day, a singular event occurred. The two office phones were the older type that were attached to the wall or some office furniture piece and you hung the receiver on a hook. Strouger switches were still used by the Bell so one could dial numbers by clicking the receiver hook quickly. Sometimes Jim and I would do this just to pick somebody at random to tease or whatever. I sometimes would sit

in the bosses office, click the phone and Jim would wait at his desk until we connected with somebody. Then he would pick up and listen in or sometimes initiated a conversation and I would listen in. This particular day I reached a woman and before I could say anything she asked, "George?" or some name that I now cannot remember.

I answered, "Yeah," in my deepest possible voice.

She continued, "You'll go down to the car and get the keys and he'll be there." I don't remember the exact words but it sounded like a hit. I panicked and motioned to Jim to pick up the phone but I signaled him just to listen. The woman must've heard a click or something because she questioned, "Is this George?"

"Of course," I replied.

There was a pause and she said, sounding upset, "For a minute there, all sorts of wild thoughts were going through my head. You're certain that you understand the instructions?"

I had to answer, so I replied, "Yes."

She then asked me to repeat what she had said and tell me when and where whatever it was was to take place. I answered in a low voice saying there was no need I understood everything. However, she realized that I was not George and she screeched, "Oh my God!" and hung up. So like a fool, I hung up and ran out to talk to Jim. We were both excited and before I could say anything, he hung up his phone. This was too bad because in those days the caller could keep all of the switches in place after the callee hung up. Thus, we could have phoned the cops and they could just trace the line by following the switching. However once the connection was broken that was it. I had a vague memory of what I had "dialed" and the conversation was in English so I was pretty sure that the party was in the West part of the city. Jim and I spent the rest of the afternoon trying to trace the call, but it was useless and we only hoped that we had saved some poor schmo's life or at the very least, scared off any perpetrator that might have evil intentions.

Johnny was a character and every once in a while he would come into the office to join in some of the fun. He seemed to like me and one day I was whining about the fact that my grandmother did not have enough butter. Butter was still rationed as was sugar and other items even though the war had been over for two years. Johnny told me not to worry he could get as much butter as I wanted. When I told my grandmother this, she laughed derisively and told me that this was impossible. To which I inquired "How many pounds would you like?"

She sneered, "Three, and how much are they?"

".25 a pound," I snapped back.

"My grandmother immediately whipped out three quarters, handed them to me with a histrionic flourish and stated, "I hope you're right about this."

It seemed that Johnny had a friend next door who was the foreman of this warehouse. Amongst other things butter was stored there-lots of it. I gave Johnny the \$.75 and he brought me back 3 pounds which I took to my grandmother that night. I wish I could've photographed the expression on her face when she saw that butter. Her eyes lit up when she started telling me about all of the goodies that she was going to cook. Then she asked if I could get more. "No problem," I

replied and I brought her three more pounds the next day. When I told Johnny about this he laughed hartily and asked me if I needed some sugar.

Out of all the jobs that I had had so far, this was the best. I got on famously with the people but most of all it never got boring because of Jim. Jim after finding out I collected limericks was a fund of new limericks which I had never heard before and of course, all of them were filthy-the best kind! He would roll the stanzas off his tongue with the utmost relish and both of us would end up on the floor laughing. Even the Scotchman found them very droll. We recited some of them for Johnny but his English wasn't sophisticated enough in some cases to fully appreciate the humor. I didn't dare try them out on Mr. Dustin.

I was quite satisfied with my salary and I think I was supposed to get a raise but alas I got into some difficulty and had to quit. Furthermore I was sent out to the country to separate me from "bad influences." The thing to remember is that Mr. Bennett upon hearing of my plight offered any services that I might require. And of course my rustic experience has to involve more work which I will now describe.

10. Bonnie Burn Farm

I ended up with a 35-year-old farmer named Ormond. He lived with his parents on this dairy farm and was divorced but has a significant other who was a nurse. She would come out for weekend trysts and during the week Ormond would work at various jobs with three other individuals whom he hired. I shall name them Moe, Larry and Curly. Maul was a young guy in his 20s who already supported a receding hairline but wasn't very strong individual and well-versed in all the chores associated with farming. Larry was a bespectacled character who had four sisters and was also well acquainted with farming and construction, but was a tad more intellectual. Curly was something else. He was the epileptic scion of some rich, Hampstead family who had decided to get rid of him by placing him on his farm. He was a hoisome individual and I took an instant dislike to him. I think the feeling was mutual. He was a hard worker and did all of the grunt work like digging ditches, helping in the barn by shoveling shit and so forth. He has absolutely no sense of humor and he had that slight Mongolian look but he was no trouble except when he had his grand mal seizures. Ormond was up to the task of handling the seizures because his first wife was an epileptic and he knew all about them and the various procedures. I have written elsewhere about the capers with Ormond and his parsimonious ways. But we both got on famously with one another and we would spend many a night playing gin rummy or some other card game. He treated me mostly as an adult but every once in a while would revert to acting his age by reminding me that he was older. For the most part we got to be very good friends and shared intimacies that only very close friends share.

Working on the Brown farm was quite hard. The first month was there, in the latter part of April 1948, we had mostly inside jobs such as painting various objects, laying in the floors, doing a bit of planting and so on. Ormond has an old upright piano that was horribly out of tune but he devised a tuning fork

ingeniously made out of a pair of old pliers or something with which I could tune the piano. This took all afternoon as I recall but I managed to get into playing shape and started to entertain everybody with boogie-woogie. At this time I had no idea of how to play jazz piano-let alone bebop. I could still read music with difficulty since I have lost my ability by not keeping up my reading.

As I recall it rained a lot but as soon as May arrived we started out building and repairing summer cottages. I never liked farm work. It was hard-especially on my hands, which used to swell up to twice their normal size. I found a trick using kangaroo gloves, which were well suited to rough, physical work but in spite of protecting my hands, they still manage somehow to swell up.

Ormond had given me a separate bedroom with a fairly comfortable double bed because there is no way that I would fit in his bunkbeds. One morning I was snoozing away when Ormond came in to roust me, asking me to help him round up some of the neighbors cows that had broken out and were wandering around all over the place. I have had the misfortune of indulging in this exercise several times before and what we did was run around in his 1932 truck, chasing cows and cornering them and then cajoling them to go back from whence they came. I grunted a "yes" which seemed to satisfy Ormond and he left. I had no intention of getting up for this chore so I zonked out again. Ormond appeared a second time and insisted that I arise forth with. I told him that I would be right there and probably went back to sleep. The next thing I knew I felt too strong hands on my feet and Ormond yanked me forward, grabbing the end of the shoulders and sat me up. Now I was awake and had to help him fetch those miserable beasts. Of course, just after he grabbed me and finding myself in this ridiculous position I could do nothing else but laugh heartily. This changed Ormond's demeanor from one of anger and he realized how ridiculous this situation was.

Another time Ormond decided to loan me out to a lumber mill. Needless to say, I had no choice in the matter and I still remember how tough a week I was and I thought my hands would never return to their normal size. All this time I was getting paid some nominal fee by the hour and I had to work off I believe \$25 per month to pay for my room and board. This amount was a supplement agreed on by my grandmother and Ormond and her portion was \$75 per month. As I recall I had to work off three months and then Ormond promised to pay me cash. He kept rigorous books and was very parsimonious soul I could not do any padding but eventually I managed to pay off my debt. This allowed me freedom of movement and by chance I managed to meet some of the summer Westmount crowd at the local boat club and began to socialize with them. Of course they were not into working at all-certainly not any manual labor. Our days when I was with him were spent in playing bridge, tennis, swimming or hunting. Because there was no electricity on the farm, Ormond's brother, Glenn, agreed to let me sleep on an old bed in his garage where there was electricity and I could listen to my records. I also could crash there at nights if it weren't too cold. However, Glenn did not appreciate my mooching breakfasts from his softhearted wife, who used to invite me almost every time I stayed there and feed me with bacon and eggs or whatever. Other times I would have enough money to buy a breakfast in town and then I would proceed to the boat club for fun and games.

By the end of the summer I was hardly ever at the farm unless I was working trying to get some cash so that I could gallivant around. I must relate one incident that was quite singular. BB speckles Larry was somewhat amused that a bit envious of my freedom and comings and goings. One day we decided to go for a drink at a local establishment. This watering hole was on a side road from the main road to Waterloo and it had a greater than 90° turn which was a bit downhill so when one was turning one usually had to slow down for fear of tipping over. Larry and I got into the 1932 Ford and as we approach this turn, instead of slowing down Larry pressed the accelerator to the floor. The 1932 Ford managed to get up to 50 mph and I suddenly realized that Larry was going to make the turn despite the speed. I panicked and yelled for him to slow down but they seem just to spur him on. I thought I was going to shit myself I was so scared. Suddenly Larry turned the steering wheel violently counterclockwise and we slid over, the tires screeching and he then pressed on the gas proceeding towards our drinking establishment. I asked him, quote what the fuck are you doing? You almost killed us!"

Larry burst into peals of laughter. He explained, "I got you good that time. I practiced this three times before today so I was sure that it would work. Hee hee hee hee." This was his idea of a joke.

I managed to hitchhike to my aunt's place in the US and spend a couple of weeks there. I neglected to tell my grandmother and when I told Ormond, he didn't think I was serious until I didn't show up for a week. My aunt informed my grandmother who was wondering why I was away from the farm at all. I had a wonderful time in the US and returned with plenty of stories about my exploits. Although the work was very hard on the farm when I was actually working, the summer of 1948 turned out to be a pleasurable experience but what was I to do with myself when winter arrives? I moved into town away from Orman's farm and decided to go back to school. My experience of the past two years taught me that to get anywhere I would have to have a decent education and my natural flair for mathematics and curiosity in that subject created a large impetus for me to pursue my intellectual goals. I entered the local town school taking grade 11 but this was a mistake and I found myself immersed in a plethora of useless courses and the mathematics that I wish to learn was stuff that I had already mastered. I soon became totally disinterested and after a few run-ins with the authorities I was asked to leave and so I went to another school that was just opening and the principle there put me into a classroom with all three grades nine, 10 and 11. However, I learned despite the fact that I had to hitch hike every day to school in the middle of winter and I used to come in sometimes very late in the morning. Fortunately for me, the first fellow that I befriended at the school was a very dear friend of the principal's. Meanwhile, my boat club friends would come to visit me on the weekends and as a result my social life was very full and happy. When one of my friends heard of my dilemma at the school he suggested that I go to the new school in Granby. I have written about this adventure so I won't belabor the issue here-suffice it to say that I was placed in a grade 12 program and managed to get my senior high school leaving certificate. This enabled me to enter an American University and I was able to fulfill my educational dreams.

11. Canadian Johns-Manville

it was now the summer of 1949. I just finished writing my senior high school leaving exams and I was awaiting news about my possible entry as a freshman at MIT. My grandmother made it clear that I was persona non-gratis in Montréal largely due to my grandfathers drinking and she just didn't want more trouble. Of course she suggested that I get a job somewhere and I appealed to my principal. He had been instrumental in finding new places to room and board whilst in Granby and I have written about those experiences elsewhere. The school principal did find me a job in a place called Asbestos. It was a small town in the province of Québec that contained a huge mine and the raw asbestos was then handled by Canadian Johns Manville company. Mr. D., the principal, had connections with the company and also was a native son so when he asked the company to offer me employment, they acquiesced immediately.

I packed up my gear into my huge trunk, took the bus to Asbestos and accosted the man that I was told to seek out. He was very friendly and said that he had already found a place for me to stay. I taxied up to this old looking house and was greeted by a French Canadian woman who ushered me upstairs into a medium-sized bedroom which stank of this of workmen's sweat. The landlady pointed out that my bed would be the one next to another bed in the room that some workmen occupied. My understanding from Mr. D. was the Johns Manville owned the hotel where most of the office workers roomed. I was also informed that I would probably be working as a cost accountant. I didn't know beans about cost accounting but I was assured that with my prowess in mathematics and would not be a problem. My reaction to my rooming conditions was immediate. I think the landlady for her trouble called a cab and went right back to the man that sent me to this establishment. I informed him that I was promised a room in the hotel although I remembered either going there before the rooming house incident or after and being told that no rooms were available. In any case I planned to go back to Granby or to Foster where I could stay a day or two with my friend, Sandy. The personnel man seemed to be taken aback but he quickly got on the telephone and the next thing I knew I was at the hotel and assigned a room on the second floor. The room has a wash basin, no toilet, a double bed and some steel furniture, but best of all, they had electricity, which I had sadly missed whilst on the Brown farm. As I recall the rent was nine dollars a week and meals were included. Also, there was a bus that one could take going to work and returning to the hotel each day. I started work immediately and was assigned to a fellow whom I shall call Dennis. Dennis was the typical accountant type-fastidious, quiet and had a limited sense of humor. He showed me the ropes and while I was learning wasn't too boring but became so after a few weeks. There were some young people like myself, most in their 20s and some very fetching females. I had brought my cat, speckles, given to me by one of Larry's girlfriends in Burlington. This I think was another reason that my grandmother did not want me staying with her anymore. On the same floor down the hall was the bathroom that everybody shared. It

contained some showers and of course I ran into the other folks that resided on the floor. The girls took to my cat right away and more often than not they would steal speckles at night and return her in the morning.

It was a hot summer and each morning when we arrived at work, we would have to uncover all of the office equipment that were used to protect said equipment every night from the asbestos dust. The amount of dust was considerable and of course the first thought that came to my mind was that I was breathing this crap every day. To amuse myself I bought a lot of jazz 78s (mostly bebop) and at noon after lunch I would go to my room and play them. The first time I did this I was in for a rude awakening. All of a sudden there was this tremendous explosion and the hotel room vibrated so violently that my record player arm jumped out of the groove! It seems that the mining staff had chosen noontime to blast out more asbestos from the huge pit that abutted the town and the hotel. The asbestos pit with gigantic and even contained railroad tracks that supported cars and engines to carry the stuff away. There was also some antipathy between the office staff and the miners and the miners were in the process of striking. I met a couple of them while hitchhiking. They told me their tales of woe and I had to sympathize with them since they were treated very badly. Of course I was not supposed to commiserate with them since I was part of the office staff myself. However I found that they did have legitimate grievances. Also, I must say that I was highly unimpressed with the people with whom I worked. I didn't really get along with any of them very well and I didn't particularly like them. For one thing they were always deprecating my music and as usual had no knowledge of music whatsoever. As far as communicating with any of the ladies I settled on a very fetching girl that cleaned my room and volunteered to look after

Speckles. We were soon frolicking around in my bed.

The weekends were deadly. There was nothing for me to do. A lot of the staff played golf. I hate golf. I agree with Mark Twain's succinct assessment. I phoned my friend Sandy a few times and invited myself to stay with him on the weekends. When this was not possible I would hitchhike somewhere else-anyplace I could think of just to get away from that environment. My only solace was the fact that I had good news from MIT. I was being accepted as a first year student in the fall of 1949. I had passed all my senior HS leaving exams as well so it was just a matter of toughing it out until the fall. Sometimes the office manager would give me a ride to some location that was on his way home. He liked me and as the summer drew to a close he told me that there was a great future at the company and the usual bullshit. You should have seen his face when I told him that I was quitting the job and going to university. He seemed to be quite miffed, to say the least and I got no more rides from him. Outside of Elsie, the maid, Speckles and two puberts whom I met playing basketball, the summer was dismal. And when I left, these three were the only ones that sided me luck. I left Speckles with one of the girls that used to come to my room for visits. She was about 27 but I never got any real positive vibrations from her although she did seem a bit sad that I was going and asked to take the cat. I knew there was no way that my grandmother would put up with the cat so I left Speckles and

returned to Montreal and stayed at my grandmother's until I could get my passport and visa and my alien registration card which I ultimately did but I received them too late for MIT so I ended up at Clarkson-one of their subsidiaries that did not make it to MIT itself. I was disappointed but there was no way that I could wait one year as MIT requested.

12. A Bizarre Interview

Now I must fast-forward to 1954 after I had attained my BA and B.Sc. I figured that with these degrees I should have no trouble attaining employment. I could have not been wronger. I went all over the place seeking a job and I got nowhere. I put an ad in the paper and outside of insurance companies, I couldn't get arrested, let alone getting work. An amusing incident did occur when I went for an interview at a large insurance company. After some palaver with the usual personnel imbecile, I was ushered into this huge office, replete with a very expensive desk and a very thick carpet. Seated at the opposite end of the room was this individual who looked like a character out of some movie. He never smiled and he bade me to sit down, which I did. Then he just sat there and stared at me. I expected him to say something but he did not!. So finally I said, "Well, shall we sit here and look at each other or shall we exchange some pleasantries?" The absolute faintest smile appeared on his stony countenance, but he did not or would not laugh. To me that was a bad sign. Finally he did speak and he inquired, "What would you like me to say?"

"Well, you could start by telling me what type of work you would like me to do."

"I think that can be arranged," said he and after a bit of discussion he pressed some button on his desk and summoned some other asshole who took me on a tour. One of the places that he showed me was a small room with three or four individuals in the room fiercely studying insurance propaganda and mathematics. This fellow also introduced me to some of the people that were employed at this establishment and this absolutely convinced me that I wanted nothing to do with any of this. It was too weird-even for me.

13. Bell Telephone

Finally, in desperation after getting nowhere in my seeking employment, I appealed to my grandfather's old accountant, Peter, who was also working in the insurance business. He had once told me that he had some war buddies in various positions in different companies. He phoned a friend and to make a long story short, I was offered employment in the Bell Telephone company. I was so desperate that I took the job-a mistake that I would sorely regret. After being hired I found out that all of the engineers (called management) were forced to work all day Saturday being paid their regular salary because they were behind in their work. This was a real drag since I was taking courses at night at Sir George Williams College. Also, I still had work playing gigs from time to time so I had a full schedule.

At this juncture the Bell management was housed in this old funky building in the center of the city. It had various floors-one of which I was put on in a huge room with a lot of desks and I was handed a large tome entitled "The Bell System Practices" and I was instructed to read this and study it diligently, all day! I had the temerity to ask some questions which didn't go over too well and the explanations that I received were more confusing and vague than what was in the book that I was reading. After a few days I wanted to head for the nearest exit but I was quite broke and not receiving any more money from my parents. I was on my own and I also had a wife to support plus I had to pay for my night courses as well.

After a very hot summer and somehow managing to weather the storm, the Bell moved to a new building on Guy Street which for me, was much easier to get to. I was placed in a small group in the toll area and given the job of installing repeaters-something else that I knew nothing about. The fellow next to me was a real pain in the ass and every time I asked him some questions he would carry on and expostulate about transformers. The only respite was at noontime when I found three bridge players. One of them, at the instant of noon, would grab a table, drag it into the center of the room, pull up chairs and deal the cards while munching on his lunch. As far as the work was concerned I had a hell of a time trying to figure out what I was supposed to do. Then one day I noticed one of the bosses ogling me whilst standing outside his office cubicle. I've been stared at before and at first I thought that he was just checking me or us out. But then it occurred every day! Meanwhile I had managed to become mobile, running around with various papers. I soon found that downstairs on the first floor they sold the New York Daily News and I used to buy this rag every day, take it into one of the bathrooms and sit on the can and entertain myself with all the latest gossip. Nobody seemed to miss me during these intervals so it made the day more bearable. Eventually I was moved to the switchboard section, still in the toll area. I wasn't sure whether this was a step up or a step down. At least I had my own desk and my own phone with my own local. Thus my wife and friends could call me directly without going through any switchboard. In those days there was a special number which was known as triangle zero and then a four digit number which one dialed and the call came directly to me. This made me feel a bit more important but the work was boring and totally uninteresting. However, most of my lunch hours were spent conversing with my musician friend, George, who usually just awoke at this hour.

Some of the annoyances were the cockeyed glares and snide remarks that I received when I brought in a lunchpail rather than a paper bag or briefcase housing my lunch. At that time I could not afford a briefcase. I did not like anybody particularly and I guess the feeling was mutual. I did befriend one English fellow who came up to my apartment on occasion but we did not really become friends. After six months of this bullshit I decided to throw in the towel and I quit to seek employment elsewhere. Besides, I had not been given a promised raise in my salary even though the Bell had decided to raise the minimum starting wage to \$270 per month, rather than \$260. I even complained to the toll area chief (who was kind enough to grant me an interview), but no change

was forthcoming so I figured that this was their subtle way of telling me to “get lost” which is exactly what I did. Come to think of it, I never heard of anybody getting fired from the Bell, certainly not anyone in management. Even so, there were a few characters there that seemed a bit sad to see me go and did wish me luck.

I had a connection (no pun intended) provided by a fellow employee to a position at a Vancouver phone company. I took the train to Vancouver sans my wife but upon further investigation I returned. The bad news was that I was still unemployed. The good news was that I had an interesting trip seeing the rest of the country, going through the rockies and I managed to go to Vancouver on the CNR line and return on the CPR line. It proved very exciting. When I detrained and went back to my apartment I found my wife staying at another place because she and her father were completely cleaning and repainting our two room cold water, top floor flat. We soon resettled and I once again hit the pavements seeking a suitable job. Fortunately, I managed to sustain myself with musical gigs but I kept hoping to find another day job in science or engineering.

14. Canadian Marconi

It took me a while but I managed to obtain a job as a junior engineer (accent on "Junior") at Canadian Marconi. This establishment was accessible by train or bus and as I recall it took only 20 minutes to get there. But Marconi was situated in another one of these old funky buildings but the staff seemed to be much more friendly and consisted of a motley crew of individuals. I met a fellow there that used to come to my jam sessions. He later ended up teaching at McGill University.

My first assignment was to test vibrators-the kind that were used to convert DC to AC. It seems that the radios being used in taxis and police cars were malfunctioning in an unusually short time. A subsequent inspection revealed that the sets' vibrators had crapped out prematurely. Hence the decision to run tests on them was implemented. I was put in this room next to another room surrounded by a Faraday cage, housing a large computer. I was given a dozen sets and told to test vibrators, randomly selected and running them until they crapped out. The fellow next door was a big Polak, who was very friendly and we hit it off right away. We used to sometimes take the same bus to get to work. My wife would sometimes forget to give me money for bus tickets and I used to regularly bum money or tickets from my friend. He had an assistant, an ex-teacher who used to exasperate him on occasion with his antics. His assistant would constantly be fussing with something and then distracting my friend when he was trying to work. Every once in a while I would have to calm my friend down and I would intervene and make some joke and we would all end up laughing. However, one day I heard some noises and I observed my friend's assistant playing with one of these gooseneck lamps. It had crapped out or something and he was trying to fix it. My friend told him to leave it alone and he would have the maintenance people perform the necessary chores. His assistant ignored his plea and the next thing we knew the gooseneck touched the Faraday cage. Huge

sparks ensued and all the fuses were blown! My vibrators stopped vibrating, my friend's computer stopped computing and crapped out completely. All the lights went off. Before I could do anything my friend yelled out, "You fucking idiot! I have been running a problem on the computer for the last three days and was about to get the results today!" My friend then went for the assistant's throat and I had to restrain him and beg him not to strangle the poor fellow. My friend was about to do this to one of the security people, who had turned off his computer the week before, ignoring the sign in big, red letters saying, "Do not turn off power." My friend informed me at that time that another two or three days of computing went down the drain.

Another day I was visited by a fellow engineer who brought in a new device that was being developed, much akin to the present day fax machine. This device would copy sheets and hopefully transmit the same via wires. Of course the first thing that we did was to copy out some \$10 bills since the paper used for copying was much like the paper used in money. We chose the \$10 bill because essentially the machine did not transmit color but the ink used was very close to the color on the \$10 bill. We soon got tired of this exercise and the engineer came in daily and tinkered with the machine endlessly until one day he announced that it was ready for demonstration. He summoned one of the big wheels, who brought with him some fellow from the USA that wanted to purchase this device. I was in the room tending to my vibrators when the two individuals came to see the marvelous demonstration. The engineering fellow started by placing a paper into the device and leaned over to adjust something. He wore a tie and the tie got caught in the rollers of the machine. He was quickly drawn closer to their machine and started yelling for help. My friend ran over from his cage, but the both of us, upon observing this fellow's plight broke up immediately into peels of laughter so much so that we could do nothing. The poor engineer was practically being strangled and fortunately the machine stopped. The American guy and a big boss were both laughing while the engineer was still trying to extricate himself from his new device. Finally, one of us took a pair of scissors and cut off the tie. This of course made us laugh even more. The poor engineer was red-faced and sputtering, trying not to lose what composure he has left. Needless to say, it was back to the drawing board and I never did find out what the eventual outcome was.

Then there was my boss-a fellow I shall call George. After all the vibrators crapped out I had noted all of the hours that it took for each vibrator to expire and so on and applied some statistics. In order to do this I separated all of the vibrators that crapped out into two separate piles. This was fairly easy because there were a number of vibrators that lasted quite a bit longer than the others. One could see that there was probably a significant difference between the two piles, but to make sure I applied the Student's t-test and did the usual statistics. As I was performing mathematical jujitsu the first time, my boss, George, walked in. He was curious about my mathematical endeavor and inquired as to what I was doing. I explained it to him and he seemed quite happy with the explanation and went on his way. However, the next morning he came in first thing and started to argue about the statistical method. I patiently explained the process

once again and once again he went away satisfied with a smiling face. You guessed it; the next morning he arrives again and I had to reexplain everything. Meanwhile, since all of the vibrators had come from the same manufacturer I went to the accounting department, resurrected the records of purchase and found that the vibrator pile that contained all the vibrators that had crapped out first came from the same shipment! The others came from various other shipments. To me, it was obvious that Marconi had received a shipment of defective vibrators. However, it was not clear to George so we had another heated discussion and I thought that I had made a cogent enough report so that any engineer could follow the logic. George decided that I should speak to the chief engineer. It was becoming obvious that they did not want to confront the vibrator manufacturer or to accuse them of faulty vibrators. The chief engineer looked over my work and complemented me highly but when it came time to ask for their money refund I heard a 15 minute expostulation on why this was not a good idea. When I informed my Polish friend of these meetings he broke up and told me that I had much more patience than he would've had under the same circumstances. Anyway, my days of vibrator testing were over and so I was assigned to another department headed by a Swedish engineer, as I recall, and he promptly gave me a drafting table to work on and some electronic circuits and he told me to put them together in some fashion so that the particular electronic device would work! At first I thought he was kidding, but he wasn't. I started to sweat and went to see my friend, Lionel, who was an engineering brain-the chap that I mentioned before who became a McGill professor. After Lionel stopped laughing, he wished me the best of British luck, patted me on the back and went back to his section. I managed to put something together but my brain was already working on some way to find myself another job-quickly!

I perused the want ads in the newspaper into my good fortune there was an ad for hiring engineers in the USA.

15. Bendix Radio

The personnel people were coming to visit at a local hotel for a few days and hopefully enlist Canadians. I went for the interview and the personnel manager and I seemed to hit it off and when he asked me about my qualifications, I told him about my degrees from Sir George Williams. He had never heard of the place and grabbed his Merriam-Webster collegiate dictionary, thumbed to the University section and tried to find the college listing in that tome. Fortunately for me, it was listed and a huge smile crossed his face and he made me an offer. The offer was for \$365 per month and he averred that the company would pay for the move. This was capital to me and I immediately accepted the offer and he promised an official letter would arrive in a few days-which it did. Recall that this was the early 50s and I was anxious to get back to the States. The salary that he offered was \$100 per month more than I was getting at Marconi. I hastened home to tell my wife of my good fortune. She was not too happy because it meant leaving her friends and relatives behind but I reminded her that I was doing the

same thing. Now my problem was to obtain a green card so that I could work full time in the USA.

My first task was to go to the US consulate, get the necessary papers and so on. I also had to get a new passport and by week's end I had all my papers in order and I managed to get my passport quickly without any assistance from anybody else except for two signees. A week went by and nothing happened! I called the consulate and they gave me some bullshit so I phoned the personnel manager at Bendix. He was wondering what has happened to me. When I informed him of the delay caused by the consulate he told me he was going to write a letter, which he did. That letter had its desired effect. Two days after they got the letter I had my papers ready to present at the border and I got my green card, no problem. I kept a copy of that letter as it showed me how powerful industry was in getting government officials to move their asses.

We trained to Baltimore and we found some rooms to rent from some lady that was all sweetness and light at first but turned out to be the worst virago that I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. Every few days we would end up in a shouting match so I made sure I found another place quickly. In the interim we were trying to buy a house but with my limited funds we were having some difficulty and also Bendix was nearer Towson, a suburb of Baltimore and this made traveling more difficult. The real estate woman provided transportation. I also moved into a house with a spare bedroom with very nice people. They treated us well and later when I moved to Florida, I met my landlord coming out of a movie theater! We talked over old times and he was there on a short vacation and subsequently returned to his home in Baltimore.

Eventually our real estate agent found us a nice little property on a quiet street amongst middle-class homes for \$10,500. It had two floors, two bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs, and attic, a small finished basement attached to a two-car garage and over said garage was a screened in porch which overlooked a backyard extending about 200 feet to a hill which connected to a dead-end street. At the end of the property just below the incline was an outdoor barbecue and to the left of the dead-end street were woods where we could walk and running across the property was a small brook with a little wooden bridge that spanned it. Next to the brook was a large Azalia plant which housed beautiful flowers at certain times of the year. It was quite a little gem but I still needed to find a ride to work since we did not have a car. Indeed, my wife had to go a few blocks with one of these metal carriers to get food. We managed to get a big freezer and as it turned out our next door neighbor was the head of the meat department at a food company so we got the best cuts of meat at wholesale prices. The way I met him (and the other neighbor next door) was the squeaky wheel on my electric lawnmower, which by the way, was inadequate for the size of my lawn. It took me several hours almost every week to cut the damn thing and the neighbors finally took pity on me-the one lending me his very powerful gas mower which did the job in about 15 minutes! His wife wanted to learn French so my wife would go to their house twice a week and teach her. I have always been lucky with neighbors, except for one in Montréal. In that case we started out friends but he took umbrage at my son's musical band's cacophony..

The job itself was a revelation to me. The Americans, I found were very competitive and they worked like dogs, unlike their Canadian counterparts who spent most of the day gossiping. That doesn't mean that the Canadians didn't work, they just went at it at a slower pace. After a brief confab with the personnel manager, I was put into the auto radio section type testing these units. The actual design work was left to three engineers-one an MIT graduate, the second a Chinese PhD and the third, a Canadian engineer from the U. of T. These individuals were the "brains" of this section and one quickly got the impression that one kept away from them unless summoned. Actually, the Canadian fellow upon learning that I was also a fellow Canuck sought me out and we became friends enough for him to come to supper a few times. The other two individuals that were hired with me in Montréal were French-Canadians-one of them was perfectly bilingual and somewhat Americanized. The other was the more typical provincial type and had difficulty with English and did not remain long at Bendix.

I have to describe a bit of the environment and the structure of Bendix to prepare the reader for the ensuing events. We were all issued badges. These badges were of different colors. For example, a green badge indicated a junior engineer with the lowest salary. Of course I had one of these badges. The next level as I recall, was a blue badge and a red badge, a purple badge and so on. Anybody wearing a green badge was automatically searched nightly i.e. not pockets searched but anything that was carried in or out was thoroughly examined to see that no thievery was done. Blue badges, purple badges waltzed through with no problem except in special circumstances. My Canadian friend could walk in or out with his briefcase and he was not above carrying out a few electronic goodies from time to time. He offered to take out stuff for me on occasion and I must admit that I did cop some tubes and resistors etc. When type testing radios we were put inside Faraday cages to make certain that there was no electronic interference. The big boss of this section was named Glenn. There were other smaller bosses-one in charge of drafting, one in charge of quality control one in charge of type testing and so on. There was an upstairs section where product development would take place. This section formerly was the TV section, which had been disbanded. However there was a room full of TV parts still extant and each day more and more stuff would disappear until finally there was nothing left but a few funky old cables. The thievery that went on at Bendix was outrageous. Everybody did it but everybody looked the other way. Bendix had subscribed to a new feature. This was to hire engineering students for periods of three months to teach them a hands-on approach to every day engineering. This way when the student graduated he would not only have the intellectual knowledge of certain phenomena but also have hopefully gleaned an amount of practical knowledge as well. MIT did not subscribe to this method. They insisted that their people should be trained strictly with theoretical concerns and they alleged that their graduates probably would be useless for the first two or three months but after that, watch out! This philosophy seemed to work because every time I ran into one of these graduates they were always on top of everything and could explain every detail replete with mathematical equations. It never ceased to amaze me.

One day I was called out to install some radios in cars for road testing. I was just finishing with this one car when this individual came up to me and barked out, "When you get finished with that, I have a radio for you to install in my car." I looked at this fellow and took an immediate dislike to him partially because of the way that he spoke to me. I asked, "Who is this for?"

"Never you mind, just do it when you're finished there!"

My retort was immediate and to the point. I said, "Fuck you!"

"What did you say?"

"You heard me. I don't know who you are, so get lost!"

With that he went over to my immediate boss who I think had heard this repartee and when the fellow apprised him of the situation, my boss inquired, "Who is this for?"

"It's for my car and Mr. so-and-so (one of the bigger wheels at Bendix) told me to come here and have my radio installed."

"Well," said my boss, "we are really not authorized to do this so I'm afraid you're out of luck. By the way is that a Bendix radio you've got there?"

The fellow got a bit flustered, muttered something and absquatulated quietly and that was the end of that. We heard later that when he complained to the bigger boss, the bigger boss just laughed and wished him better luck next time. I might add that one of my engineering buddies saw the bigger boss spirit out a large color TV set in his car one afternoon after work! It seems that nobody is above being a thief.

Bendix would buy other radios, checking out their circuits and pirating anything that they might find useful or that would work in their electronics. The standard FM tuner of the industry at that time was put out by Fisher. As I recall it was the model 80-T. This model was multi-tubed and housed a wonderful discriminator circuit. The development engineers fussed over this unit for weeks. All of the competitors' units or electronics were subsequently disposed of to a store in the building and these things were put on sale to be bought exclusively by Bendix employees. This store was run by a Jewish fellow who was constantly complaining about the paucity of the goodies that he was receiving. Of course there weren't that many goodies, they were being stolen by the employees before they ever got to this guy's store!

Now at this time I was placed upstairs in a Faraday cage and given an assignment of some sort so I went about my business and nobody took much notice of me. One day I heard some of the engineers talking and drooling over that Fisher. There was one fellow that just had to have that tuner. His boss was sympathetic as was his cohort so the day that they finished using it, this fellow placed it in his briefcase and that was the last that anybody saw that tuner. I had witnessed all this and was highly amused. Later I was called in by Glenn, who was looking for that tuner. I really think that he wanted it for himself. He questioned me at length and knew that I couldn't possibly have stolen it because I was searched every night. He asked who the last people were that were playing with it and of course I told him that I wasn't paying attention since I was working so diligently on my own project. I didn't give him one name and I wasn't about to. Later the boss of this section came up to me and I told him I saw nothing I knew

nothing and I spoke nothing, like the three monkeys. He seemed to be very pleased with this.

Glenn was furious and after he had spoken to me he called a meeting of all the section heads telling me to stay in the room. They all filed in and listened to his screed about stealing. He then said, "From now on Mr. White, here, is going to be in charge of all of the old electronic equipment. You are all to hand over anything that is outstanding herewith and Mr. White will have a special metal cabinet and he and only he will have the key to open the same."

I was flabbergasted. I think he chose me partially because I was Canadian and in those days Americans loved Canadians and trusted them. I had to keep myself from laughing and I daresay my Canadian engineering friend was probably rolling his eyes around since he had piked a number of items for me in the past. Glenn continued that he was going to crack down and let the guards know that there was all this going on blah, blah, blah. He then dismissed us and designated this huge metal cabinet where I started storing all the goodies. I think I could even hear my friend Mervin laughing since we always had the policy of keeping each other well-stocked in electronic parts as soon as one of us had a job.

After I had finished my stint upstairs I was given the chore of designing some circuits and I needed a transformer with special characteristics. I perused the usual catalogues but nothing would suffice so I went to the transformer department and after being assured that I could not possibly get this transformer for at least a month because they were so busy etc. etc., I left but an individual from the department summoned me and said, "Do you really need that transformer this week?"

"Yes," I replied.

"I understand that you are now in charge of all of the cast off equipment."

"Yes," I replied.

"I have an old Buick and I need the radio for it. I understand that there was a radio that would go into a Buick."

"Yes," I replied.

"Well, if somehow I could get that radio I could possibly provide your transformer for you within the week."

"That certainly could be arranged, but how about tomorrow? That would even be better."

"How about tomorrow afternoon?"

"Perfect. When would you like your radio?"

"How about this afternoon?"

"How about right after I get the transformer?"

The fellow laughed heartily and agreed and we went on our way. I got my transformer and he got his radio and I got kudos for getting the transformer so quickly. I just told him that they gave it to me so quickly probably because I was new and they didn't know me that well. They swallow that one hook, line and sinker and everybody was happy. The word got around so I made a few other deals trying to keep everybody happy. I tried hiding some of the leftovers in the TV parts storeroom but even these were stolen much to my chagrin!

Subsequent to Glenn's rant I was approached one day by my Canadian engineering friend and he asked me if I needed some stuff as he was taking out the briefcase with some of the goodies that he wanted. I had my eye on a couple of 6 x 9 speakers and I asked him if this was possible to get them out. He alleged that this would not be a problem and that he would probably take them out on Friday. I was happy to hear this but then one of my buddies told me that security was going to do a thorough check on Friday due to Glenn's lecture. I ran over to my Canadian friend and told him to cool it and wait until Monday or Tuesday-I was in no hurry. He assured me that everything was okay, that they never bothered him because of his badge and so forth. I warned him that they were getting serious and that he should wait. He did not and as a result they caught him with my speakers and his paraphernalia along with the head of Glenn's drafting department and some other fellow in Glenn's section. This of course, made Glenn look like the fool and he was obliged to fire all these individuals. He did not want this. The Canadian engineer was responsible for some of the best radio design work, the drafting department head had been there for 10 years and incidentally he also was piking some 6 x 9 speakers. Glenn tried every which way to smooth things over but eventually all three individuals were cashiered. I felt very bad about my Canadian friend but it did not take him very long to get another job-this time at Douglas Aircraft. I think he even got a raise!

They had a motley crew in the auto radio section. I met a born-again Christian, a loudmouth American draftsman who kept calling me "Junior," a classical violin player and a Cajun fellow with whom I used to bum a ride. I made the mistake one day of telling him an irreverent Abe Lincoln joke that was related to me by some fellow musicians and not only did he not laugh but he took umbrage and wouldn't speak to me for a couple of days! However he was not all bad-he liked the "Peanuts" comic strip. I also was invited to one of his Cajun suppers which was very nice so we ended up friends. He forgave me for my "bad joke."

Baltimore have a lot of jazz musicians and I have written elsewhere about my musical experiences there. I was also active in the local theater company but left town before anything happened. I did manage to run a lot of errands for the theater group, being driven around by no other person than the personnel chief's wife. However, I was getting bored with the work and my engineer neighbor kept telling me to go for interviews as it was the only way to get pay raises.

There were certain aspects of the job that I did like, however. One of them was the typical B-flat cafeteria which was situated in the Bendix building. They had great crab cakes, egg plant and chocolate milkshakes that were very large, extremely thick and were provided with an extra large straw since use of an ordinary straw would render it impossible to suck up any part of the milkshake-it was just too damn thick. Of course I would suck up one or two of these shakes every day. This job was certainly less boring than the ones that I had before (except for Canadian Welding Works), largely due to the interesting characters that I met. However, Americans seemed to be obsessed with "security" and this obsession borders on [aranoia. A case in point occurred when one day when I was wandering around the plant, I happened to look in one of the glass cubicles

and I spotted one of my Clarkson college friends that used to attend our jam sessions and sometimes provide transportation for us when we needed it. I waved to him and he motioned for me to come in, which I did. No sooner did we start to exchange pleasantries when some asshole with a very angry countenance accosted me and started to rave about the fact that I only had a green badge and what was I doing there and so on. He embarrassed my friend and we both beat a hasty retreat out of the cubicle into the corridor to complete our conversation. However, he was summoned back and I could see that he was getting a mouthful of shit. I had to stay away from there and I never did find out what the hell they were doing. But, aside from all of the negativity, I found the whole time a learning experience and was not sorry that I had stayed as long as I did.

16. Black and Decker

I took his advice and landed another job as Black and Decker. This job paid me \$125 per week and again I was in the engineering department. I was slated to help design the motors and so forth connected with their equipment and tools. The chief engineer seemed to take a shine to me and I figured that I would enjoy working with this fellow. He told me that the big wheels had implemented a new policy for the new engineering personnel. That should have been a tip-off right then that dire things were to ensue. However, I was quite naïve in the business world at that time so I agreed to participate in this new plan. I was told that I would spend six weeks in the sales department, getting to know the company's equipment. Then I would spend one week each in the factory winding transformers, testing mechanical equipment, working on the assembly line and so on. After all of this rigmarole I would then be assigned a desk and start actually doing some electrical engineering. My immediate boss seemed like a nice fellow and I was always paid promptly every week.

Actually, this was a bad time for me. My mother had recently died and traveling to Cleveland on the train I had contracted a terrible cold which persisted and I would wake up at two or three in the morning gasping for breath. I went to see some big-time doctors at Johns Hopkins and was assured that I had a sinus infection but it was not too dangerous. I was given a chemical called "Tedral" which dilated my bronchi but its side effects kept me awake with my heart a-pounding so I was prescribed seconal to help me sleep. My sinuses were completely fucked up and I had to continually blow my nose dislodging huge gobs of yellowish green snot. I could not very well carry a box of Kleenex around so I opted to put a roll of toilet paper in my pocket instead and use this when necessary. My thoughts now turned to getting a job in Florida or some place in the South where I could cure myself. Baltimore's weather, especially during the winter was not exactly the most salubrious. The week came when I was supposed to do some transformer winding. I sat down and started but I had to arise every now and then to blow my nose, which I did. All of a sudden the foreman came over and started giving me shit. Furthermore he almost got apoplectic when he saw the roll of toilet paper. He became extremely abusive and I finally told him to

fuck off. This made him turn purple. He then told me I was fired! I told him I was fine with that and I went home. I got a call from my immediate boss wanting to know what happened. I explained precisely what had transpired and he was quite satisfied with the explanation but he told me to move to the testing department so the next day I found myself in the testing department. This was housed in the basement of the building on a wooden floor made of wood bricks. These bricks were held together by some smelly glue which attracted houseflies and there were millions of them around! Also the flies loved the grease that was used to lubricate the mechanical devices and there was this ubiquitous gluish odor that permeated every cubic inch of that space. What the hell was I doing here? I decided to tough it out and my first assignment was putting this metal table together to be used subsequently for testing equipment. This proved to be a lengthy task and I was continuously interrupted for odd jobs.

One lunch hour I was sitting at my desk, minding my own business, gobbling up my lunch when this individual came striding along and spotting me, stopped and glared at me. I had my feet on my desk to ease my back and all of a sudden this fellow said, "Get your feet off that desk!"

"And who might you be?" I inquired.

"I'm a foreman here and I'm telling you to get your feet off that desk."

I knew that this desk was not his desk nor was it anybody else's desk since I had been specifically assigned a desk-i.e. it was definitely my desk and this asshole was not above to tell me what to do with my own desk. My next reply was very succinct and so I retorted, "Fuck you," and continued to eat my lunch.

There was a pause as the fellow was trying to comprehend his disbelief and then he said, "I am the foreman of this section."

"I don't give a shit if you're the Pope, I'm on my lunch hour, Jim!"

He then stomped over to me, trying to intimidate me or scare me or whatever but I just looked at him like he was an imbecile (which he was) and then he asked me who my boss was and I said, "Well, first of all, you are not! I work in the engineering department and you can speak to the chief engineer if you have a complaint."

"I'll do just that and you won't have a job tomorrow."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. Now if you don't mind I'd like to finish my lunch in peace and quiet." I thought the man was going to have an apoplectic fit. He muttered something and finally left. These two experiences made me think that I might be working in the wrong establishment. So far I had been working for two months or so and had not seen anything resembling a schematic. I finished my lunch and went back to my assembling metal tables. The next day I looked up from under one of the tables and there was the chief engineer staring down at me. "What the hell are you doing there?" He asked.

"I'm diligently putting together metal tables," said I and my most sarcastic voice.

"I can see that," he retorted, "and this is not what I had in mind for you."

"That makes two of us."

"Get up out of there and come with me-now!"

We went up to the engineering section and he assigned me a desk and then told me that he had heard from that obnoxious fellow, whom he didn't like either. It seemed that there was some antipathy between the blue-collar and white-collar workers in the company. I was really feeling under the weather but I decided to tough it out until I could get another job somewhere.

Actually, except for those two incidents with those morons, I found the rest of the staff quite friendly. I met the big wheels when I was with the sales people and I must admit that they seemed quite affable. My immediate boss was also very kind to me. We usually were paid on Fridays and I had experienced an especially bad Thursday night, never zonking out until 4 a.m. I was so exhausted on The Friday morning that I just stayed home and never bothered to phone anybody. My wife was employed at the time as a salesgirl at one of Baltimore's finest department stores. She went to work to pay me back for the week's wages that she had lost when attending a movie. I used to turn over my salary to her each week and she would pay the necessary bills, buy food and if I needed some cash, she would allot the amount. This system did not work out very well. I think that I mentioned earlier in this work that I was often without money or lunches. This episode ended out system and from then on, I handled all the finances. I did not expect to get my pay until the following Monday but I was pleasantly surprised to see my immediate boss at my door. He had my paycheck and was worried about me. I thought it very nice of him to make a special trip to my home to make sure that I received my week's salary. My wife quit her job as soon as I was paid back in full. But I could see that this job was not working out and I really needed to get to a warmer climate and try to get my health back.

17. Radiation Incorporated

As luck would have it I heard from someone that some people were coming from Florida recruiting engineers. I decided to go for the interview but I was feeling so bad that I didn't bother putting on a suit or anything I just decided to go wearing a sweater. Now that I think back on it that might've been one of the reasons that they hired me since in the South and the West I understand, they're more tolerant of your sartorial tastes. I managed to hit it off with the personnel fellow and I was offered a position at a company called "Radiation Inc." I was told that this was a small company in a small town called Melbourne in Florida that worked on government contracts involving telemetering systems. I accepted the job under the usual conditions. I got a raise in salary and they were going to pay for my move and transportation. I managed to sell my house fairly quickly but I had to take a second mortgage. Everything turned out all right. I was paid and actually made a profit on the deal. I should have kept that house and rented rather than sell. I liked the house but I needed the money in case I wanted to buy another house in Florida. Meanwhile, my sinuses were getting worse and I was becoming completely dependent on those damned chemicals and I managed to oversleep a few times not showing up for work until late in the morning. This went over like an iron cloud but by this time I was too sick to care and besides I had been hired already for my Florida adventure.

We managed somehow to keep our female cat, Patsy, and we entrained arriving in Melbourne. We got off the train with some luggage and there was absolutely nothing or nobody there-not even a taxi! I hastily called the personnel fellow and he came to fetch us and deposited us at a local motel where we stayed for \$25 per week. Our stuff arrived and we had to put it in storage. We did not have a car so in order to look at houses we depended on real estate people to help us but they were not like the people in Baltimore. They kept showing us dumps. In one place there was a tree growing in the living room! And they had the unmitigated gall to try to sell us this as a unique Florida opportunity. Then the personnel manager got upset because I had not reported to work as yet. We finally decided to rent th place until we found a house. I started to work and to my great surprise of the fellow whom I shall call, Syd, who used to give me rides to work at Bendix was now working at Radiation! It was good seeing a friendly face and as luck would have it I was assigned to his section. Syd was a single fellow, quiet but had an idiosyncrasy. This was his propensity to use a plethora of expletives when explaining a new circuit or concept to his underlings. It was really bizarre since his normal speech was never involving any of the Anglo-Saxon expletives and his normal demeanor would not indicate in any way that he even knew such language. I couldn't help laughing when he was explaining things because of this language and he didn't seem to mind. I don't know whether the other engineers were shocked or not but if they were they didn't show it.

The job was mildly interesting and I worked under Syd until we finished the project and I was transferred to another section under a boss named Art. Art was the epitome of squareness but a very good engineer and a good boss. Furthermore, his boss was the fellow that had hired me along with the personnel fellow. I got along with the big boss and was even invited to his house a couple of times for parties. I had two technicians working under me. One was an ex-Navy man who turned out to be a nasty prick. He resented the fact that there was this young whippersnapper that was his boss and took every opportunity to try to make me look bad. The other fellow was a really sweet guy and a crackerjack technician. Anything you asked him to do he would do and then some. It was a pleasure to work with him. The first fellow one day unscrewed bolts on my desk chair so that when I swung about the upper part of the chair became undone and of course I went ass over tea kettle. I knew that he did it but I couldn't prove it. Another time I had set up a test board using a transformer and he shorted leads so that the transformer blew up and of course I was blamed for it or so he thought. Art knew better since I had the presence of mind to show him the setup and there was no way that this could have been accidental. He did nothing about it but I'm sure that he didn't forget about it.

I was given the task of designing a transistor amplifier having certain specifications. Ordinarily this would have been no problem if this involved vacuum tubes. The year was 1957 and only one person in the company knew anything about transistors. I gleaned all the info that I could from this individual but I had to really start from scratch by first using the test equipment to find out the characteristics of the transistors that I was using. There weren't that many transistors around and they finally settled on some Delcos that could utilize large

currents. I did manage to concoct a working amplifier-that is one that met all of the specifications but it was a crude effort even with my nice technician's beautiful housing that he had made for my device. Art was even impressed.

In the interim there were changes taking place, one of them being that my friend, the big boss, decided to form his own company, finessing some of the government contracts and taking with him three of the top engineers. This upset me but what was more upsetting was that heads were rolling all over the place. Every day that I came in there was a missing engineer. One day I had gone into the testing lab with my device and the two engineers there who had assisted me were gone the next day! They had been summarily cashiered. Syd was still there but I began to experience some anxiety-namely, when was it my turn? Also at this time, I had put a down payment on a four bedroom house in town with orange grapefruit and avocado trees on a 200 foot yard. I had to somehow extricate myself in case I lost my job. Fortunately my wife did not like the house. Then I thought even if I did lose my job I could rent the house and ultimately pay for it, but she was adamant; the contractor had painted the rooms the wrong colors, the rooms were too small and so on. I had put down \$1000 as a deposit. As I recall the house was going to cost \$15,000. I went to the real estate people with hat in hand telling my tale of woe but they just wanted to keep my money. I appealed to one of the smarter engineers and he found a loophole in the contract and I ended up paying \$50 and I got the rest of my money back. But thinking back on it I should've bought that house anyway and rented it until it was paid for which wouldn't have taken too long actually and I would've had a house in Florida.

Then one day I came in and sitting at the big boss's desk was a strange fellow whom some of the other employees called a "potato farmer." He didn't look too friendly and after a couple of days he summoned me in to his office and barked out, "Get that hair off your face!" At this time I was growing a beard.

My instant response was, "Fuck you!"

His response was immediate-he said, "You're fired!" I walked out of the office running into Art. He was smiling and I figured that everything would be smoothed over. Alas it was not. So I gathered up all my parrots and monkeys and departed. Unlike Baltimore where I had made many acquaintances with the people with whom I worked I had only befriended people unconnected with the company except for one couple. We would eat suppers together, watch TV and so forth.

We never did buy a house finally so we settled into a very nice duplex rented to us by a young couple that tolerated cats. The husband was a Mormon and worked at Cape Canaveral. Our cat Patsy had a plethora of kittens and they kept getting killed because to get cool they would crawl up between the tire and one of the car fenders. Most of the time the husband would bang on the car fender and the kittens would scurry off. Occasionally they would just get run over. There was one kitten named Peter that survived and turned out to be a beautiful animal. My wife fell in love with him. He was so gentle that he was afraid of birds. The birds took great delight in swooping down on poor Peter and Patsy would have to come to the rescue. She was a fearless hunter and killed snakes

and other vermin around the house. Peter would sometimes go out on the road to play with the moths and he had several close calls with automobiles. We tried to teach him not to go on the road but we could not see the inevitable happened. He was killed and my wife cried for three days-she loved that cat. Not only was he beautiful to look at but he would purr easily and was very loving. Patsy finally went wild and we eventually ended up catless.

There was a particularly singular event that I must relate because it still disturbs me. When I took my lunch hours I would go into town usually bumming a ride from one of the employees and I gravitated toward a small local record store run by a Jewish chap named Dud. Dud was an ex-musician who had wisely invested his moneys in stocks during the crash. Working as a musician in speakeasies he always had cash and he snapped up a lot of the blue-chip stock and of course later reaped the rewards. He married an ex Las Vegas showgirl who ran the dance studio and we became friends and Dud and his wife was frequently come over for supper. Dud was not a well man. He had a bum ticker. He was always telling me how badly he wanted a Jaguar. He opined that his wife wasn't too thrilled about his desire. Frankly, I didn't like his wife all that much. She had an attitude and although she got along with my wife, I could never get around her and she began to really piss me off. One day Dud was bitching about his health. I could contain myself no longer. I told him, "Man, you've got money and you don't know how long you're going to live so my advice to you is indulge yourself while you can. Go out and buy that Jaguar-it's your life and with all due respect to your wife, if she really cares for you, she should be happy that this would make you happy."

"You know what? You're right," he replied, but I thought he would wimp out and my badgering him would have no effect.

I could not have been wronger. A few days later I heard a knock on the door. I went to see who it was and it was Dud. I bade him to come on in and have a drink but he said he had something to show me. I accompanied him outside and to my amazement there stood a brand-new Jaguar complete with leather seats-the whole 9 yards. I was elated and I said so. Dud was so proud. He asked me if I wanted a ride and I said yes. So I hopped in and he drove me all over the place at breakneck speeds telling me how fast it would go and how many gadgets that it had and so on. When we returned I asked him if he would mind giving my wife a ride. My wife loved cars. Dud obliged and he took her for a spin as well. The next thing I knew-it couldn't have been more than a month later, Dud had died! I was thinking to myself how great it was that he had finally fulfilled his wish. But I was also pissed off since his wife never thought to apprise us of his demise until such a later date. I was thinking about all this when there was a scratch at my door. I looked out and there was a black cat. I opened the door and he trotted in and when I sat down he jumped up on my lap and put his little paws around my neck! I was overcome with emotion and somehow I equated this with Dud's death for some reason. Was there some relation between that black cat and Dud? I dismissed this as a silly thought but it haunts me a bit to this day. Furthermore, the black cat hung around for about a week and completely disappeared. I must

confess that I was not the only one perturbed about this but my wife also found this very strange.

I sought in vain for another job around the same area. The Cape was alive and kicking but there were no jobs offered to Keith White. As it turned out that was quite fine with me since I had received a nice stipend from my mother's estate and there was enough to sustain me for two or three months at least. Thus my wife and I spent the rest of the summer months surfing in the ocean. We would arise around 6 AM, eat breakfast, go to the beach, swim until 12 PM, eat lunch, swim until 5 PM, eat supper and try to watch TV until 9 PM-usually flaking out at about 8:30 PM. As soon as we got home from swimming we would shower in order to wash off all of the shell bits and other debris picked up at the ocean site. My sinuses had been completely cleaned out by the ocean's saltwater. The first three weeks had me exuding huge gobs of yellow and green snot and at the end of this period I could smell things that I had not been able to smell since I was a child. My wife and I also gained a few pounds-all of it muscle and my wife looked even more beautiful than ever with a beautiful tan and no fat. This was all due to the swimming. All good things have to come to an end and receiving more money I decided to go back to school and try to obtain a master's degree. This meant that we had to move to Miami and we did so staying at a friend's house until we could find a place to live. And so ended the year 1957-a wonderful summer of beachcombing and finally finding a small house to rent in the northwest section of Miami quite far away from the university but the rent was good and the landlord and landlady were very nice. The next step was to start classes in January of 1958 at the University of Miami graduate school hoping to attain a master's degree in mathematics. I completed the classes and courses in the third semester of 1959 but I ran out of money so I had to go for another job. Going to the graduate school at the University of Miami turned out to be one of the biggest mistakes of my life. My interest in math at this time was chiefly in Engineering math and I hoped to increase my knowledge in applied math. I was certain that this would help me in future jobs. After all, I was trained in an engineering college. My first interview with the professors at the U of M grad school was a shock, to say the least. When I used the term "applied," eyes were rolled or cocked and I knew I was in trouble. Since my wife and I had already settled in Miami and the alternative was to move again to a smaller city where the University of Florida was extant, would be a major operation at this juncture. I should have done this, but instead, I pretended interest in "pure mathematics" to make sure that I would be accepted at all at the U of M. The bad news was that I found myself in a morass of symbols and courses that were nut-cracking hard and I don't believe I saw a number for a year, let alone an applied engineering problem. A fellow student, an Argentinian, decided to transfer to the U of F after our first semester. He had had it. When he returned for vacations, we would get together and he was able to help me understand a couple of the courses in about 15 minutes after showing me some practical problems that could be solved with the theories that the U of M was throwing at us. The good news was that I managed to sweat through all of the pure stuff and actually learn crap that I would never have been exposed to. Indeed I managed to be able to use my knowledge of

set theory in a future job as you shall see in a later chapter. Also, I probably would not have been able to teach the “new” math with the same degree of confidence.

Our life was also changed because my first son was born and not being able to find work in Miami we returned to Montréal and found an apartment to rent for the summer of 1958. I had done some radio and TV repair in 1957 in Miami and my friend, Mervin and I spent the summer months experimenting with electronic circuitry and doing some repairing on the side. My wife and I left at the end of August to find a new place to rent nearer the University. We were lucky to find a nice new apartment with air-conditioning but my wife developed eye trouble and was laid up for about six weeks. At the end of the third semester I did not pass my orals until 1961. We came back immediately to Montréal and settled in the apartment near our in-laws. My father-in-law was my landlord and we had a nice big apartment for my wife and son and I managed to procure a job at CAE electronics. And I now describe some incidents and working conditions at that establishment.

First I have to say that one thing I never did in all of the places that I ever lived was to welch on the rent or to pay late. I always try to pay at the first of the month and especially to my father-in-law. This is not to say there was sometimes difficulty finding the money but somehow I managed. My money had run out, having used it all for my graduate education. So, it was now that I absolutely had to find some employment. I have learned by experience that the best way to find something in engineering was to somehow get past the personnel department and try to talk to the chief engineer directly. This scheme worked for me several times because what would happen would be that the engineer that I was to see and be interviewed by would direct the personnel department to have me fill out the necessary papers and there is no way that the individual in personnel could somehow cancel the interview or allege that there were no positions available. The personnel people with whom I would come in contact were usually very conservative and at that time anybody that sported a beard was immediately suspect. Actually I must divert a moment here to prove my contention. When I went for a job at a big aircraft company one of the girls in the personnel department was the sister of a classmate of mine at Sir George Williams. We recognized one another but said nothing. I didn't want to compromise her position nor did she want to compromise mine. I phoned her later and asked her if she could yank the file, make a copy and let me see how I did it at the interview. "No problem," said she. "I'll have it for you in a couple of days."

True to her word she handed over the whole file and I had made a decent impression but at the end of the comments section was a note saying, "but he wears a beard." This fact seemed to impress his fellow more so than the other qualities which he had extolled. That's why I have an aversion to these personnel types.

18. Canadian Aviation Electronics

In any case, talking about beards, the chief engineer that interviewed me at CAE sported a rather lengthy red beard, as I recall and maybe he was delighted to come across a fellow traveler-I don't know. He promised to check over my qualifications and he would let me know if he was going to make an offer within the week. Frankly I did not expect too much and was pleasantly surprised to find an offer of employment in the navigation development section. This section produced a lot of the electronics used in commercial aircraft and they even had a simulator that the engineers would check out their equipment on to make sure that all was functioning properly. I was assigned to a tall Dutch fellow whom I will call Kitz. Kitz was always impeccably dressed and very self-confident. He was a crackerjack engineer and also somewhat of a taskmaster. The first thing he did was to assign me to a room with a workbench and he outlined a circuit for me to test. Upon perusing this circuit I noticed that it had both positive and negative feedback seemingly interfering with one another. Of course I had to point this out to him and he scowled and explained the intricacies of his design. It was ingenious and what's more it actually worked! I was impressed. But he made the mistake of trying to pick on me for questioning his authority. He became rude and insulting so I came back with a few apt and snappy retorts which reddened his face and took him aback. He looked at me curiously and was trying to figure out how dare an upstart junior engineer sass him like this? His reaction was somewhat surprising in that from that time on he respected me and then I realized that he was one of these guys that you had to stand up to or you are finished. The fellow next to me was a Jewish guy who had graduated from MIT with honors. He was designing a very intricate and important circuit for an aircraft. As soon as Kitz would enter the room he would start bullying this fellow and start browbeating him unmercifully, chiding him about his MIT qualifications. I told the Jewish fellow that he had to find his backbone to deal with this guy but I think he was too afraid of losing his job. That's one thing that never bothered me. I always drew a line and if anybody crossed that line in management or otherwise, I was out of there and I figured I could always find some other work. Maybe now in these times I could not do that-I don't know. Anyway, Kitz and I got along like a house on fire.

To illustrate this, I must describe the working environment outside our cubicles where we did breadboard engineering. We had our own desks and these were aligned three side-by-side with various individuals working at projects. There was an Indian chap that did mostly mathematical calculations all day. There was another Jewish chap who did other non-breadboarding type work and there was this draftsman fellow who was a bit off and one of his misadventures found him and his car stuck on railroad tracks with the commuter train approaching! He ran up the track trying to stop the train but to no avail and his car was totaled. He was trying to sue the railways but the fact was that he went around the gate trying to beat the train so he had no possibility of getting any money. After a bouts of palaver with this individual I found that he was an imbecile at best.

One morning I walked in, strode to my desk and there was this idiot sitting there with all his papers so I asked him politely what he was doing there. He gave me some snide reply and I again reminded him that he was at my desk and to

vacate it forthwith. He just snorted and ignored me. So I said, "You have exactly 3 seconds to get your crap off my desk or else..."

"This isn't your desk and I need it for my work."

"Use your own desk," said I.

"I don't want to."

"One, two, three..." and with that, I took my arm and swept all his paraphernalia onto the floor. His pencils, pens, ink, drafting paper and so on all ended up on the floor. The other engineers were laughing heartily. The poor fellow didn't know whether to shit or wind his watch! He started to yell, carry on and curse. I told him, "I warned you. Stay away from my desk!"

All the commotion caused Kitz to come out of his office to see what had transpired. He strode down and surveyed the mess. I apprised him of the situation and the other fellow was trying to blame me and so on. Kitz looked around, scowled and everybody kept quiet. He then roared out, "Does everybody see this desk here? This is Keith White's desk. It is not anybody else's desk. Is that clear?" He then turned to the draftsman and said, "Now clean up that mess and get to work!" He turned about and strode off back to his office. Of course I was elated since I had visions of being fired or chastised.

My bouts with the simulator were not inspiring. I usually ended up flying the plane underground! There was a testing lab for the equipment that we developed. There were two very surly Dutchmen in there and enjoyed finding any flaw they could possibly find in the equipment that the engineers developed. They really had an attitude but when I began to think about it this was probably a good thing because people's lives depended on the equipment that we were designing and developing so they're was then no room for any mistake. And while I'm on the subject I must relate an incident which I believe happened at CAE. One day we needed some condensers for a circuit that we were designing. There were none in stock so I started to phone a local radio supplies store to procure the needed condenser. I was stopped before I could order them and I was told that in order to purchase any needed supplies one had to go through the purchasing department and make out an order etc. etc. instead of one of us picking up the parts during lunch hour or at the end of the day. We would most likely have to wait for several days or a week for that matter in order to obtain our parts. Anyway, I got a hold of this asshole in purchasing and I told him that I needed some .1 microfarad condensers. I believe that I asked for four of them but the purchasing chap seemed to have a hard time with the word microfarad and kept repeating and asking me what I wanted. It was obvious that he knew nothing about electronics so I kept telling him and told him to write down what I said, which he allegedly did. The condensers were not forthcoming so we switched temporarily to another project so as not to waste any time and after a week or so I phoned the purchasing chap and he told me that they were on order and they should be here any day. Well, two days later the purchasing chap phoned me and tell me that the condensers had arrived. I told him to bring them over. He answered that they were too big and heavy. He then added that he would send them over on the track.

"What the hell is happening?" Thought I. I then asked him, "Why are they on a truck? Tell me exactly what you ordered."

He answered, "The one farad condensers like you requested."

I couldn't believe this. This idiot had actually ordered one farad condensers. Nobody could be that stupid. Furthermore, each condenser cost more than \$100 as I recall. I immediately went and told Kitz and he nearly had a stroke! I don't know how this was resolved but I do know that that fellow in purchasing began seeking employment elsewhere. I used to regale my students with this story to impress upon them that decimal points were important and getting marks for method was okay in school but not in industry. "Almost" is only good in Horseshoes.

The summer was coming to an end and I wanted to get back to the USA somehow. The year was 1959 and I enjoyed the United States tremendously in those days.

19. Curtiss-Wright Aircraft

I started looking around for jobs and as luck would have it, a company in New Jersey was seeking engineers. The company was Curtiss Wright aircraft and I figured with my experience at CAE I might be able to land a job there. I again managed to get through to the chief engineer of the section and was looking for people and he advised me to fly down for an interview-all expenses paid. I must add by this time I had developed a bit of trepidation for flying after experiencing the following incidents: a Montréal to Toronto trip where each and every member on the plane ended up puking out their guts except for me, who is too scared to even do that; several flights that involved air pockets transferring my stomach up to my mouth. But the penultimate flight was yet to come-my trip from Montréal to Paris where even the stewardess got scared. I had visions of ending up in a cold Atlantic Ocean as supper for some shark. As it turned out the flight to the NY was not too upsetting except that we climbed for 10 minutes, leveled off for another 10 minutes or so and then descended to New York city. The flight back was the exact reverse of this and both trips involved DC-8s.

I checked into a hotel and took a bus from the Port Authority out to the Curtiss Wright plant. I was ushered into the office of a very tough looking individual whom I shall call Matt. Matt looked like he came out of a bad gangster movie. His manner was gruff and he appeared to be one of these no-nonsense individuals who demanded a full eight hour day from an employee. After the usual pleasantries he started to cross examine me regarding my work with CAE. I described to him the circuit on which I was working and he immediately said the same thing to me that I had said to Kitz-namely, that the circuit would not work and was nonsense! "Ha ha," thought I. "Now I have him." With an histrionic flourish I dazzled him with Kitz's masterful explanation. Matt was suitably impressed and realized that he was wrong. The result: I got an offer. However, my job would be to write Boolean equations of large relay circuits and then program the results into a computer language. A certain knowledge of electronics was required of course and my newly acquired prowess in set theory and Boolean

algebra was of great assistance. The actual work probably could be done by a well-trained high school student but the money was very good. My next task was to find an apartment. Matt suggested that I either live in New York City or find someplace nearby in one of the smaller areas of New Jersey. I chose New York City, mainly because of the jazz scene, which was still very active in 1959.

Finding a reasonably priced apartment in New York is and was almost an impossible chore. Somebody put me on to one of these companies that specialized in this endeavor. I was ushered in to an office of a middle-aged Jewish woman, who eyed me suspiciously and carefully listened to my tale of woe. She produced a huge box with various cards containing addresses. The prices of these establishments were way beyond my means and I made some remark about being back in Potsdam, New York, where I only paid four or five dollars a week for a room. All of a sudden the woman looked up and I asked, "You were in Potsdam?"

"Yes," I replied. "I attended Clarkson College and..."

"Are you familiar with the Potsdam State teachers College?"

"Sure. I attended some classes there as well."

"Do you know blah blah?"

"Of course. I not only took a course from him, but sometimes we would hang out together." With that, the woman put back the box and opened up another drawer containing other cards. She riffled through a few and procured one stating that it was an apartment on the west side renting at \$90 per month! This was about half of anything else that she had previously shown us. She told us that we would have to buy a mattress but she could recommend a friend that would sell us one for around \$35. My jaw dropped! This was uncanny to say the least. It seems that she was a graduate or something of that State Teachers College and I knew most of the names because I used to hang around all the time trying to get at some piano to practice on. Most days I would be thrown out and I would have to go back to the Baptist Church to practice on their upright. The trouble was that the church was hardly ever heated. Anyway, the place was reasonably clean and even had a concierge, a janitor and an Afro-American that collected garbage and cleaned up. The concierge was a Spanish fellow, the janitor was a typical white New Yorker and the Afro-American, whose name was Henry, was a burly fellow seemingly unfriendly at first but eventually I managed to befriend all three of these individuals. My wife was sometimes mistaken for a Latin girl and this was definitely a detriment until they found out that she was French-Canadian and therefore "acceptable." Being that I'm usually a very friendly fellow I got on famously with all of the aforementioned individuals and even was invited up to our janitor's apartment for a cup of tea. He also reduced my rent down to \$65 since he was getting a cut and decided that he would forgo his cut. Henry approached me one day and told me that the FBI had been checking up on me (I was being cleared for security reasons) and he assured me that he gave me a very good recommendation. The Spanish fellow came through for me when I fell ill with a terrible virus and had to remain in New York City after my wife and son had returned to Montréal. He brought me some TV dinners since

I had no food at all and was too weak to go out and procure some. I was very lucky.

I must now return to a description of my work area and the individuals that initially were in my immediate area. Matt was housed in a glass office where he could keep his eye on all of the engineers in his section. Most of the employees at Curtiss Wright were Jewish. My section, oddly enough, has another Canadian engineer. He had rented an apartment from a mortician and of course joked about how quiet it was downstairs etc. etc. My immediate boss was a middle-aged Jewish fellow who had an attitude and after meeting me he immediately started questioning me about some mathematical formula. Also, I learned soon enough that he was always trying to find errors in my work and when he was lucky enough to do so he would make a big deal out of it and try to humiliate me. I didn't bother to react at this at first because I found him to be an annoying ignoramus. We were all squeezed into a very small space and the desks were so close to one another that there was really only one path that one could take to access one's desk. Opposite my immediate boss there were two individuals-one was a Chinese fellow and the other was a very excitable character who was always going off half cocked and he seemed like he was about to flip out at any minute. There was a certain amount of repartee but we mostly kept their noses to the grindstone. There were two other guys seated next to the Canadian fellow but I had very little contact with them. My work was straightforward. I was given these huge relay schematics and I had to write Boolean equations of the circuits, reduce the equations to their simplest form and then program the steps into a computer language for spacecraft.

My wife and son stayed in the apartment most of the day but would sometimes go out for some fresh air and see the sights of New York. My biggest problem was getting to work. The only direct line to Curtiss Wright was either through the Holland Tunnel or via a Port Authority bus. The bus did not arrive until 10 AM or thereafter. Hence, I had to seek a ride in some carpool. I got lucky; there was a fellow who lived nearby with a car and we got together, made a financial arrangement and I was supposed to meet him at such and such a corner each day at such and such a time. I shall call this fellow Harry. The reader can guess what transpired. Harry was never on time and sometimes forgot about picking me up altogether! We finally decided on a code for phoning. Because New York's telephone system requires one to pay for each and every call, people have devised different ways and signals to circumvent their paying for any unnecessary calls. Thus, I was to phone Harry, let the phone ring for a time, hang up and if he heard me, he would phone me and let it ring once and hang up. Well, I don't need to tell the reader all the pitfalls but suffice it to say there was many a morning that I stood out on West End Ave. in inclement weather waiting for this moron to show up-which he sometimes did and sometimes did not. I was so mad one day that I practically attacked him. He was actually a very nice fellow but he just couldn't seem to wake up or something. Matt was very tolerant, which surprised me.

My Canadian friend was not only a gadget enthusiast, a 3-D camera not like myself but he had a large collection of Playboy magazines. These of course

would be whipped out as soon as Matt disappeared from the scene. However, I did not shirk my work. I got quite adept at processing those relay schematics and each day I would amass a pile of these and place them on my desk for my immediate boss to check over. By now he had a really hard time finding any errors. Matt also told me that he knew the work was sort of boring so he allowed me to read or relax between schematics. I took him at his word and so one day I took a break, put my feet up on my desk and started reading (or looking) at the Playboy magazines. I was so enrossed in this effort that I failed to see Matt returning to his office. Not only that but when I did see him he was doing his rounds checking up on everybody to see what they were doing and what they had done the past week. He started with the Chinese fellow and after the Chinese fellow answered him Matt lit into him and alleged that he had told him the same thing last week. Then he moved on to the nervous fellow. He was in the middle of his cross examination when the nervous fellow suddenly threw up his hands, yelled and completely flipped out! The rest of us started gaping at the goings-on and some people came in and carried the fellow out, still raving. Then Matt went to my immediate boss and gave him a hard time. I had removed my feet from the desk but I figured there was no use trying to pretend that I wasn't reading the magazines so I just kept on. Then Matt came to me and asked me what I had done. I pointed to a huge pile on my desk and he inquired, "Is that all you did this week?"

"No way," said I. "That's today's stuff."

"Are you kidding? You did all that today?" He turned to my immediate boss inquiring, "Did he really do all those today?"

"Yes," my boss replied.

Matt then said to me, "Keep reading. Anyone that can do that much in one day deserves a break." And with that he pressed on to the next poor fellow. Most everybody got chewed out and of course, Matt's performance with me did not go over too well with my immediate boss.

Matt called me in his office one day and informed me that he wanted me to go and take a course at IBM in various computer languages. He said that this course would last two weeks and I would have to go directly to IBM in New York City. I started out with another fellow and I must relate this experience because I found it so bizarre. The IBM building looked like a set in some sci-fi movie. Everywhere on the walls the word "think" was imprinted and the last two letters "n" and "k" trailed off downward at an angle! This was supposed to be funny and remind you to be awake. The atmosphere seemed to me to be tense and phony. We repaired to a classroom with a huge gray wall which served as a blackboard as it turned out. This nerdy looking fellow entered, produced a small stick of purple chalk and proceeded with our first lecture. The teacher had a PhD but he didn't impart too much knowledge to my fellow colleague or myself. We would be taught some computer language and then given a problem to solve using the standard IBM cards. It proved to be tedious and boring! Also the teacher wasn't too pleased when anybody asked any questions after his brilliant dissertation. I did learn two things though: one, I never wish to work for IBM and two, I learned a slick language proposed by the Bell making mathematical computations fairly

simple. Of course, subsequently this language was abandoned in favor of more complex languages such as Fortran, Pascal and COBOL, all of which I detested and found very user unfriendly. Later on I found a much simpler language called BASIC and using various versions of this language I was able to program practically any thing that I needed for solving problems. The BASIC language was contrived by some Dartmouth people who concocted a method which even college freshman could master. I am paraphrasing some article explaining the professors at Dartmouth's computer area. They added that they wanted to create a simple language so that any grade 7 or eight student would understand it and be able to use it after a few days. This delighted me because I always try to have someone explain any new concepts to me assuming that I am a grade 7 or eight student since anything more complicated will just go over my head. Once I absorb the new concepts I can fill in the mathematics myself, thank you. Anyway, we were required to write up whatever we had gleaned from our two-week hiatus. I concocted the best essay that I could muster (having learned some tricks from my various college English courses). Matt seemed to be very pleased with the result and then he informed us that we were going to be moved to another location since the powers that be felt that we were too cramped.

The next thing I knew we were all dispersed into this giant room that was obviously was once a huge warehouse or airplane hangar. My desk was squeezed between two filing cabinets which gave me a bit of privacy. On my left past the filing cabinet was an English major type and of course we would get into discussions about novels and philosophy when we had a chance-which was very seldom. On my right past the other filing cabinet was the aisle that accessed other desks. Two rows parallel in back of me sat my immediate boss-actually right behind me so that I could feel his eyes boring into my neck! This asshole was beginning to really get on my nerves . I would be in the middle of something and he would decide to nitpick about something or other. My English major cohort was appalled and could not understand why I put up with it. Finally, I did not and one day when he started nattering about some triviality I really lit into him. And when I get mad my vocabulary becomes quite colorful and verbose. Furthermore, the volume of my voice increased so much that everybody ceased working to listen to my rant. I must say it was so eloquent that a few people started to applaud! My immediate boss slunk away purple faced and sputtering, trying to find a snappy retort. There weren't any. I had completely destroyed him and he knew it. Everything seemed to go back to normal until an hour later I looked up and there was my immediate boss again and he said that he was going to speak to Matt and it was either going to be he or me. He then went away back to his desk. I started to think, "What the hell am I doing here anyway?" I watched this poor guy in my section being carried out raving. I had to run around trying to get to work and a lot of the time on Fridays I would spend three hours in the Holland Tunnel trying to get home. The only compensation for this experience was the fact that the individuals with whom I rode were very friendly and intelligent. The job itself was no hell but I was paid adequately and indeed when Lenny Tristano asked me how much I was making he was flabbergasted that I was making more than he was. All these thoughts were racing through my brain and

after a little chat with my English major cohort, I got up, strode back to my immediate boss's desk and with a melodramatic flourish I threw my badge on the desk and exclaimed, "Here, it's you then-I'm outta here!" I picked up my parrots and monkeys and left the premises. Some moron security guard tried to stop me so I told him that if he put his hands anywhere on me I'd have him arrested. He backed off and I went home on the bus. My wife was not happy about my actions but I immediately set to work seeking employment elsewhere. I got lucky again and happened to meet an old college friend from Clarkson who was working for a "job shop." He told me this was the best way to go since you didn't stay at one place too long and the pay was three times what you would ordinarily get. He gave me a number to call, which I did and they asked me to come in for an interview.

I was ushered into an office with two gentlemen-Philadelphia lawyers, no less and they interviewed me in depth. They seemed to be satisfied with my answers and my qualifications and the next thing I knew I had an interview with a firm in Philadelphia. The job was solving differential equations numerically and I assured the lawyers that I was adept in this endeavor. The facts were that I had taken courses and did have some knowledge about the subject. I met the lawyers at the company (I think it was GE) and they gave me some last-minute instructions and then we were all summoned to this board room where seated around this long table were four or five very intelligent looking individuals that I knew right away were either math majors or engineers. I thought I was going to faint because I suddenly was filled with trepidation. I was certain these guys knew their stuff and would probably make me look like an idiot. However, I decided to try to make the best of it. I stared back at them and managed to smile but it did not elicit one from them. That did not make me feel good. One of them was perusing my CV and snapped some question about one of the courses that I had taken at graduate school. Fortunately I knew the answer so exuding the utmost bravado that I could muster I shot back the answer and I could see that he was suitably impressed. After a few more questions I realized that they were just as scared as I was. They didn't want to be shown up any more than I did. All went well until one of the guys spotted a topology course that I had taken. It was a very special course only given at certain universities. As luck would have it he had taken this course from the fellow that wrote the book! He apprised me of this and of course I pretended to be delighted to be meeting a fellow student of this course but internally I was shaking like a leaf since I couldn't remember that much about this course because it was so difficult. Although I had passed it I had forgotten most of the concepts and I figured I was undone if he asked me anything about that course. Fortunately he did not and as we were indulging in some repartee about our mutual experiences with the course, the two lawyers arose and said, "Well, I guess you've heard enough and we now have to come to some arrangement."

I was sent out of the room and about 15 minutes later the two lawyers told me that they liked me and they had made an offer. I was to receive \$236 per week-this was after their cut so they must've asked for at least \$300 per week or more. Recall that this was 1959. The lawyers then informed me that the only

obstacle to overcome now was getting security clearance from the FBI. They informed me that this would probably not be a problem and one of them went over and phoned an agent to get the ball rolling. Later in the week I received the official offer in writing and the travel to Philadelphia was on a train which took two hours as I recall. It ran daily and the travel was no problem for me at that time. The lawyers called me after a week to say that it would probably be another few days but everything looked fine. Then two weeks later I received a call that the deal was off since there was some problem because I was Canadian. This was bullshit since I had been cleared at Radiation to secret. I received another letter which terminated the contract citing their clause regarding security clearance. Then I could not get a hold of either one of these gentlemen. They were always out, in a meeting or otherwise unavailable. I never knew what the real story was. Now I had to return to Montréal because my money had run out. My wife's father still had an empty apartment for us and we moved back to Montréal. My wife was ecstatic. She did not like the United States that much and was elated to find that there were no immediate plans to return there. Indeed, it was my intention to set up a repair business with Mervin and try to make a go of it whilst taking some graduate courses at McGill in math. We were not too successful and I still had to take my oral exams at the University of Miami and I decided to do this in 1961. I wasn't starving since I had my tuition paid at McGill by correcting papers and I was teaching at night at Sir George Williams College. I also did some teaching at a Jewish high school and I have written about these experiences elsewhere. It soon became clear however, that my income was not sufficient to keep my wife, my son and myself at our present standard of living. Hence, I had to seek employment again in industry. Both Mervin and I made the rounds trying to land a job. Mervin was in direr straits than I was at the time. He had lost his job, his wife and his car in that order and was about to be evicted from his abode.

20. Canadair Limited

I finally managed to procure a position at Canadair in the operations research section. At the time a lot of the engineering was done working on anti-submarine warfare or low flying aircraft attacks. The whole OR section was headed by an individual, not an engineer but a fellow with grade 12 education. My immediate boss was at Cambridge graduate in mathematics and every engineer in the section was handpicked for their general knowledge and specific knowledge of their disciplines. There was always a difficulty in the liaison between the big boss and the engineers because of the big boss' lack of formal education. My immediate boss, whom I shall call Bob had to constantly intervene to explain what was going on. When visiting the USA Bob always had to go along to make sure that his boss didn't fuck up. Bob and I got along like a house on fire. He was bright, quick to catch on to any subject and an inveterate tea drinker. It was a pleasure working with this fellow. The other guys were all quite nice and joining us right after I was hired was an Irish fellow who was full of blarney-extremely bright and provided us with a certain amount of entertainment and hilarity. All of this was the good news. The bad news was that our phones were all

tapped, we were constantly annoyed with security issues and generally working in a closed environment and not being allowed to fraternize outside of our section. We did have windows that gave a light but you couldn't open them. The light coming in through these windows provided us with a picture of the quality of the air we were breathing. We could see the light bouncing off of the finely ground dust in the air as particles glistened in the sunshine streaming in through the glass. When we had free time the boys used to ask me to give them problems which I used to glean from Martin Gardner's column or some abstruse textbook that I thought they wouldn't know about. Now I must relate what we were doing and the reader can decide for his or herself about the whole situation.

When I first started working at Canadair I was given some innocuous chores to perform until my clearance came through. This did not take very long and as soon as I received it I was briefed on the hush-hush project that they were working on. Basically it was a statistical study to determine what the probability would be for low flying aircraft to reach military targets. The low flying aircraft had to be able to fly under the radar blankets that usually surrounded said military targets. We had to take into consideration a number of factors such as the speed of the plane, the plane's altitude, the antiaircraft gun types, missile types and so on. Now, to me, any fool could see that with all this antiaircraft armament, the plane would probably have a snowballs chance in hell of making it past the first mile but I bit my lip and listened attentively while Bob explained the problem. Then the next day he told me that he was going to take me to a secret room where they were actually conducting tests using models. By this time I had controlled myself enough so that I did not burst out laughing. "Who the hell is financing this ridiculous nonsense?" Thought I. I soon got my answer-why the Americans, of course! We traipsed down to this room and entered. There were two individuals in there overseeing an humongous board with model planes and buildings which emulated a potential territory to be attacked. There were little model guns and it looked like a very rich kid's playroom with toy soldiers. The little planes had wheels and were electronically connected to various preamps and oscilloscopes. The two guys would set up different scenarios and then take down results from each scenario and record them. Bob and the others were very proud of this engineering model and they acted like kids with their Lionel model train sets. When I told Mervin what I had witnessed he fell off the chair laughing and he proceeded to go into various comedy bits which amused my wife no end.

Now the kicker: some French Canadian graduate math student had been hired during the summer months to prepare a statistical study of exactly the problem on which we were working. They showed me his work and it was fantastic. Everything was there. All the equations were there. The statistics as far as I could see, were perfect and his final result indicated a probability of .02% success for low flying aircraft! Needless to say, I had to ask Bob about this but he merely said that they were trying to verify the student's results. Then he went on to tell me who thought this one up. It seems that the previous section head (who had subsequently either quit or been cashiered) and some other fellow had a few too many beers and had thought up this study. They somehow managed to sell the idea to the Canadair management and they in turn got the United States Army

to finance the effort. So now we have the situation of the original engineers that thought of this idea no longer with the company and the section head had been replaced by this moron who lacked a university education. I wondered again how the hell did I ever get myself into this mess? The money was good and I got along fairly well with the people with whom I worked-especially Bob. The only fly in the ointment was the computer engineer-a loathsome sort that was forever giving us a hard time when it came to computer time. Remember in those days the engineers' computer was his slide rule and any complicated calculations had to be done on a big IBM computer so the people that were in charge of said computer were usually nasty and arrogant since they were the only game in town.

One of the fellows in our section whom I shall call Leonard, was a Paris Sorbonne graduate. He was very smart, but sloppy and his desk was always covered with papers and other paraphernalia. One day when I was free of work, I asked him if I could help him with something. He was delighted and proceeded to explain to me his solution to a particular problem. During his explanation he realized that he had made a critical error but had sent his computational request to the computer section so he suddenly broke off in the middle of his sentence, threw down his pen and dashed off to the computer room. Unfortunately for Leonard the prick in the computer room had already started the three-day computations. There was a heated exchange of verbiage and Leonard came back red-faced and explained to me what had happened. I commiserated with him and we pressed on with his new idea.

There was a French Canadian fellow who was very fastidious and in order to obviate any unnecessary contact with the computer prick, he bought this huge slide rule and used a magnifying glass to elicit answers to a third decimal point. I used a Marchant calculator, a very bright secretary and books of mathematical tables. Usually the tables had numerical values up to six or seven decimal places. Doing trig and exponential functions was a bit of a drag but we managed to come up with valid results.

The section head was getting on everybody's nerves. Half the time he didn't understand what was going on so his answer to settling an argument with one of the engineers was to pull security rank. Any security breach threatened to one's staying employed. Then one day some U.S. Army types appeared. They wanted to know what was going on. They had already donated \$70,000 to the project but no definite answer seemed to be forthcoming! What followed was a heated discussion in the section head's office. The people involved were Bob, the Irish fellow and two others. There were a lot of raised voices and the rest of us got very worried and very quiet. When all of the parties emerged from the office every face was red and even Bob was visibly upset. When I saw my chance to speak with him I asked, "Man, what happened?"

"Essentially," said he, "they figured we were conning them."

"What are you going to do?" asked I.

"Well," said he, "we are breaking for lunch and I hope we can smooth things out. They've threatened to cut off all monies."

"Good luck," I countered, "maybe after a few Canadian beers they'll become more pliable." Bob chuckled and he joined the others and left.

They all returned about 3:30 PM minus the U.S. Army men. I could see by the expression on their faces and lack of any rubicand traces in their features that things had been smoothed over. Indeed, when Bob apprised me of what had transpired I was flabbergasted. It seems that not only did they assuage the U.S. Army people, but they finessed them out of another \$50,000! As soon as I heard this I fell out laughing, tears rolling down my cheeks. "Bob," I said, "You should have been a con man."

"I guess I am a bit of one but Sean (the Irish fellow) certainly was a big help."

"I bet he was," I asserted.

The first engineer to go after the previous section head and his cohort was an engineer who had invented a new way to examine reconnaissance photos. The company wanted to own the idea and the patent, claiming that the engineer was a mere employee. They got neither and he quit. They tried suing but they got nowhere. Then the next thing we heard, the secretary got fired. She had done a favor or something that supposedly violated security so she was summarily cashiered. She had been an employee of the company for 10 years and the truth was that she disliked the section head as much as we did. I might also mention that she was extremely fetching with a nice body and features and being a suspicious character, I toyed with the thought that the big boss might have wanted to get into her pants. Anyway what followed was that one after another of the engineers in that section disappeared. And just before I left there were only three of us! This section head had successfully obliterated the operations research department. Bob got into conflict with the section head but he quickly found another job in United States for much more money so he left. I had been given a problem in anti-submarine warfare and needed some information which was classified. The section head would not let me see the required information even though I had secret clearance. This pissed me off and I got into a bit of a discussion with him and t told him off. The next thing I knew I was being hassled at the gate by the guards wanting to open my briefcase. Now I had waltzed back-and-forth for many days carrying my lunch in my briefcase without any problem. The first time this occurred I opened it but every time I went in or out they wanted me to open it so I became annoyed and one night I refused to open it. One of the guards got very surly and said that he was going to phone the police. So I asked him, "Where's the phone? I want to use it." The fellow was somewhat taken aback so he let me use it. I immediately phoned 911 but before I could say anything the guy came over and put his thumb on the receiver hook.

"Ha ha," I exclaimed. "You don't really want to phone the police because if you do I'll have you arrested for trying to stop me from going out."

"You're not going anywhere!"

"Yes I am, and if you try to stop me now I'll have you arrested for assault and battery and potential kidnapping. Make my day!"

"Just open your briefcase and you can go."

"You want to see my briefcase, here it is, I'm out of here." With that I walked through the gates and left my briefcase lying on the ground in front of the guard. At that moment my wife arrived to pick me up and I got into the car and

went home. The next day I was summoned to the office of the head security guard who was an ex-RCMP officer. The briefcase was on his table and was still unopened! I could tell because of one of the latches being defective. He tried some bullshit with me and I told him that he was not an official of the RCMP and until some officials from that organization asked me to do whatever they wanted I wasn't about to kowtow to some company flunky. I added that I would cooperate in any way with any RCMP officer if they needed any information or anything. This fellow was expressionless but I could still see that he got my message. He gave me back my briefcase and I told him that we had better get this gate business figured out right now or I was going to a lawyer. I then left and went back to work.

At this juncture I must backtrack to apprise the reader of the fact that I had been to Canadair several times seeking employment. At that time they had a very nice English gentleman in personnel whose name was Tynan-Bird. He did not display the usual characteristics of arrogance, cavaliness and superciliousness that are usually extant in personnel people. He showed real interest in trying to place me in some section and after two attempts where I didn't seem to impress the people enough to make me an offer, he seemed genuinely disappointed and just as he was shaking my hand to wish me luck, one of the senior engineer happened to walk by, spotted me, came over and asked, "Mr. White, what are you doing here?" I recognized him at once as one of my night students that I had taught at Sir George Williams. We exchanged pleasantries and he wished me luck. All the while Mr. Tynan-Bird was observing this repartee with amazement. When my ex-student departed, Mr. Tynan-Bird exclaimed, "Really, Mr. White, this is ridiculous. I've got to find you something." He picked up the phone and that's when he phoned Bob in the operations research department.

A few days later the section head called me into his office and I was cashiered. I was sent to the personnel office and whom should I see there but Mr. Tynan Bird. He was very sympathetic and I got the impression that he did not like my section bus anymore than I did. He told me that he was instructed to enter on my record that I was fired. He told me that he was not going to do this but he said that he could not convince management to pay me a month's salary that they owed me. He advised me to seek legal counsel which is exactly what I did. I contacted an old teacher friend who represented me. It took all summer but I finally got my money. I also sent off a letter to the RCMP and an investigative board that were then looking into these so-called "security issues." I received a very nice reply and I hoped that my input had a beneficial effect on employees that were being bullied by inferiors who could cover themselves by using the security mechanism.

21. Computing Devices of Canada

I was out of work once more so I set about trying to get another engineering job, meanwhile playing club dates to supplement my meager income. I think I've written about the fact that my friend, George, used his own money to complete a high fidelity installation that I wanted installed in my basement playroom. I had hired him to make this structure. Fortunately, I managed to get a loan from the bank which enabled me and my family to keep eating. I finally got a nibble from a firm in Ottawa. This position was also in operations research that required me to commute from Montréal to Ottawa so I decided to stay in Ottawa during the week and commute on the weekends by either train or bus. I found a nice apartment, albeit with metal furniture, but a nice big bed in an apartment building some ways away from the job. I informed my section head about the traveling situation and he was kind enough to find transportation for me to and from work. The fly in the ointment was getting to the bus station or the train station on Friday afternoon. I managed most of the time to make the train which was faster and more convenient but sometimes I would miss the train and have to take the bus. The bus left me at a stop in the middle of the highway near Dorval and somewhat away from my house. I was dependent on my wife to fetch me and take me home. One night I never got there until 10 PM. I had phoned my wife to pick me up and when I exited from the bus into the 10 below zero weather, my wife was nowhere to be found. I waited for about 20 minutes and then schlepped over to the first lighted place I could find and fortunately they had a telephone. I phoned my wife who had completely forgotten about me and I never got home until midnight, somewhat miffed and exhausted. The commuting from Montreal to Ottawa was a constant problem. Every Friday I had to find some way to get to the train or bus on time and then to make sure that my wife knew when to pick me up. That was bad enough but the daily commuting from my apartment to the job was another matter. I was put in touch with this fellow whom I shall call Jake. Jake and I entered into a financial arrangement whereby he would pick me up, take me to work and then bring me home each night except Friday. I could not get him to take me to some means of transportation on Friday on a regular basis. Also, he drove an old rattletrap which broke down from time to time-usually the battery when the weather got too cold. I believe he was Jewish, but he insisted on listening to some evangelistic program every morning as he drove at breakneck speed down the Queensway to work. This was OK until winter set in. The Queensway would have large patches of ice and I would have cardiac arrest every morning thinking that it was my last ride. One day after work I met him at his car in the parking lot and he told me that his battery had died! I hung around for more than two hours in the cold awaiting some asshole to give him a boost. The next time this occurred (about two weeks later) one of my cohorts came along in his brand new car and offered me a lift. I took it and Jake informed me the next day that he had stayed until 7 o'clock. I asked him why he didn't buy a new battery. His answer was that he couldn't afford it. The fact was that he was too cheap. I apologized for not staying around but I gave him some bullshit about a dental appointment. I also informed him that since I knew nothing about fixing cars anyway, there was not much point in my staying around. This seemed to satisfy him.

I was again placed into a room, this time with no windows, given a desk and since my clearance had elapsed, I had to amuse myself somehow until my clearance came through. I whiled away my time by learning how to use their computer-a large metal structure that used tape and leads with plugs that one would use with a board. From time to time someone would come up with some mathematical problem but there was an English educated graduate with a master's degree who could take care of most any mathematical question. I had occasion to consult him myself because of a certain obfuscation and lack of communication between the section head and myself. He called me in one day to explain a project that he wanted me to work on. He went to his blackboard and tried to explain some statistical gibberish that made no sense to me. He wanted me to take tape recordings of noises made under the sea, record their various voltage outputs from a device known as a "kicksorter." This device did not read the same part of the same tape the same way twice. I pointed this out to him. "No problem," he exclaimed. "A time series study should give one enough of an indication about the voltages." He then proceeded to illustrate this nonsense on his blackboard and became quite frustrated when I couldn't understand what the hell he was saying. Finally, I consulted the British fellow and he told me about the above and agreed that it was most likely nonsense. However, I was on a three-month trial so I had to do something. I determined to get the kicksorter fixed so that it would read the tapes consistently-that is, each and every time the same part of the tape came up, it would produce the same results. For this I needed an engineer who was adept in transistor theory. I was given the authority to find the right people and so I commandeered an older gentleman that looked fairly intelligent and indeed he redesigned the kicksorter circuit and the rest of the crew did the breadboard work necessary. However, all of this was not easy. I would assign the various tasks to the said individuals but as soon as I left the room and turned my back they were gone. I spent a lot of time tracking them down-usually in the cafeteria and get them back to work. I had a hell of a time locating the elder engineer. I finally found him one day down in the furnace room. Meanwhile, I took another approach and sort of formulated a mathematical model of the project, still using the results from the kicksorter. A new fellow joined our group and had nothing to do. I asked him if he would like to assist me while he was waiting for his clearance and inquired as to his mathematical background. He graduated from some prodigious University in the USA and after checking on his efforts after a few days, I was bowled over by his mathematical prowess and his results. Things were looking good. Also the tape recorder that I was using was a two or four track Ampex that used 10 1/2 inch reels. I dearly would have liked to have swiped that machine for my music listening and recording!

It was now 1963 and Kennedy was assassinated during this time. Although I was doing quite well at my job (at least I thought so), the weeknights were a bit of a drag. I had to do my own cooking and since I did not drive I had to hang around my apartment mostly. I got to know the janitor, a large German fellow who referred to most of the tenants as swine because of their filthy habits. He seemed to like me and we got on famously. I amused myself by building Heathkits at night and I managed to put together an analog computer with which I played endlessly.

I also listened to a lot of records. I was invited to some parties but I really did not feel like going. My wife and son came to stay with me a couple of times but they didn't enjoy the experience and decided to stay home since there was really nothing to do.

The individuals in the OR section were a motley crew. They were all bright enough but I did not like them as much as the crew at Canadair. My immediate boss was kind of stuffy. There was a female in the group but I never knew exactly what she did. There was a midget that had an attitude and no sense of humor. I don't think I ever saw this asshole smile. One day we were standing in line next to one another in the cafeteria. Now I am 6'6" tall and this man was about 4' tall. I used to see his legs dangling down from his chair when seated at his desk. I had to make a joke so I said, "I guess we look like Mutt and Jeff." All I received was a scowl and a grunt. The British fellow sat next to the immediate boss in front of us. This was to indicate that he was not part of the hoi polloi OR engineers. The section head had his own office and blackboard as I heretofore stated. However, there was another fellow-a young loud-mouth American that would pop up from time to time. We were informed that he had special status, that he was some sort of computer genius and had special sanction from the US Navy. Fortunately, he was absent most of the time. Aside from being obnoxious he had smelly feet. They stank so much that it was stifling. Furthermore, he would enter our enclosed room from time to time, prop these scrofulous appendages on the immediate boss' desk and pontificate some nonsense about his work. Sometimes he would describe his adventures on board US naval vessels when implanting microphones in the sea. He was a bit of a bully and most of the OR people were afraid of him. I was not and sure enough, one day he tried to mess with my head. I got into a shouting match with him and finally called him a moron or something. Well, I thought we were going to indulge in some fisticuffs but he decided to leave the premises. This asshole really got on my nerves. I had come across these types when in private schools in the USA. I didn't like them then and I didn't like them now. I can't remember whether I told him to change his socks but we really went at it. Because of the enclosed space and the fact that we had no windows, the stench would permeate our air space and linger for hours.

The three-month period was coming to an end and I was called in to my section boss' office and he seemed pleased with my handling of the kicksorter problem and told me that they had decided to keep me on. I then went to the personnel department and the man there assured me that I had successfully performed my duties and the usual bullshit so I inquired if it would be all right to move into another place closer to work and closer to the transportation. I had in the interim looked around for a suitable place and was very lucky to find one that exactly fitted my requirements. Not only that but my new landlady was ready to redecorate according to my desires. I had wanted to make certain that the job was secure before I put down the \$120 for the two months rent in advance. The personnel man assured me that everything was set. I gave my new landlady \$120 and three days later I was again summoned into the personnel office. I thought a raise in pay might be forthcoming and perhaps a new assignment. I thought wrong! They had decided after all that I was to be cashiered or "let go." I was

stunned to say the least but I quickly recovered and demanded \$120 that I had laid out for the new apartment. The company refused and there was little I could do about it except try to steal some stuff worth \$120. My other alternative was to try to get my money back by explaining the situation and my tale of woe to my new landlady. I did this but I could only get back \$60 and as far as I'm concerned CDC still owes me \$60. I was again out of a job and my wife was getting antsy. I had a little money saved so I decided to take it easy before looking for something else.

I was blissfully watching TV one morning while my wife was scanning the newspaper want ads. One day she exclaimed, "Here! I found it! The perfect job for you!"

"Yeah, and what would that be?"

"They're advertising for a math teacher at a girls private school. This would be perfect for you!"

"You've got to be kidding. It's probably some snooty private school. There is no way they're going to hire a male math teacher."

"Can I please try? Let me send your CV and we'll see what happens. All they can do is refuse and there's no harm done."

"Okay, if you want to waste your time, go ahead."

And so ended my experiences in the business world and my renewed profession as a math teacher began. I never again went back into the nonacademic world. For one thing I didn't need to because by that time the salaries became interesting enough to allow me to eat and live fairly decently. For another thing my experiences in non-academia were so ludicrous and unfulfilling that even had I found something at three times the salary that I was getting teaching, I most likely wouldn't have taken it. And the funny thing was that my wife was now very proud of me and most of my friends told me that that was what I should have been doing all along. However, although I enjoyed the classroom situation with young people, I have written about all of the other nonsense that accompanies the teaching experience. The reader of these lines might want to peruse that exposition as well.